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The Black Cat

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The Hour Heroic*

BY XENO W. PUTNAM

CAPTAIN BARCLAY stared in open admiration at the swarthy giant that confronted him but could not repress a shrug of his shoulders at the jargon with which he had been greeted. What language under the vast canopy of the heavens was the fellow speaking, anyway, or was it a language at all? It sounded more like the idle jabbering of some untamed monkey in speech with the jungle.

Duffy could work, though, perhaps as no other living man could. Duffy might not be his name but it went; for it might be, so far as anybody knew to the contrary. It seemed as though he hated work, this giant of muscle, and wanted to crush it. Always there was about him the suggestion that he might presently catch the ship up between his two powerful hands and twist it into splinters if work was not furnished him. Always, it seemed to the captain, he was fiendishly working, night and day.

Captain Barclay had never seen another man he feared in all his tempestuous life. He feared Duffy, though, and with no special reason for it that he could give. Submissive the man never was but always obedient, a fiend incarnate turned loose, for the time, into useful channels. His fear of the man was like the superstitious dread of some unnatural thing that he had never seen but carried

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in his soul; and now Drake had added a new spirit of unrest to this senseless dread in the message he had plucked out of the empty air. With one eye on the man he read it over again:

> Height six feet, three; weight 220 pounds; sandy hair; arms like a ship's cable; livid scar across chest; Irish; well educated.

That settled it; Duffy wasn't the man.

"He knows as much Irish as I do poodle, that is, unless—confound the thing, it's on my nerves. Nobody ever could sham like that. It isn't Duffy."

Within an hour, though, Captain Barclay was muttering to himself again:

> Irish; well educated; a demon when drunk; a seaman for the last twenty years, mostly in the South Pacific; wanted for piracy. Report suspects to *Caledonia*; officer on board to take him.

"What do you think of it?" Barclay jammed the paper into the fist of his first mate. "Drake picked it out of the clouds a bit ago."

"That he'd better've been pickin' out his lyin'-place or a hotel in the celestials than let Duffy know of this; that's what I think. Dod-rot them wind gabbers, anyway. What'd ye ever put the thing aboard fer? No good ever comes o' them high-falutin' things. But that ain't Duffy."

No, it surely wasn't. Fiends take the idea anyway! Why did it keep on pestering him? *Arms like a ship's cable; sandy hair; livid scar across chest.* He twisted the paper savagely in his hands as he came down from the bridge and watched it absently until it floated out of sight.

They had not answered the hateful message at all. Where was the use? It was a general call, directed to no one in particular. It especially was none of their business for the *Eclipse* was out of her course and a good three hundred miles from where she was supposed to be. It wasn't their place to cut in. Anyway, this man they were dogging down—poor fellow; driven like a beast, no doubt, until he had become one—was not on the *Eclipse*. It wasn't Duffy. Without any special reason for it, though, Captain Barclay shifted the course of the ship a couple of points away from the *Caledonia's* track.

It was nearly eight bells of the morning watch when the captain made out some one hanging over him. Duffy's left hand was crunching at his arm while its mate poked a folded paper under his nose. He sprang to his feet in alarm and struck at the man—a febrile, inefficient blow against those knotted muscles—before he

noticed the message, a C Q of some vessel in trouble over a reef. Barclay bounded past the man to the deck and sought Drake, at the wireless, for the calling ship's position.

"South-east by east, sir, and a good forty miles away by the chart."

"What name?" Barclay's heart was pounding and his thoughts busy with Duffy. *Arms like a ship's cable; scar across chest.*

"The *Caledonia.* They've been calling since three o'clock this morning and got no answer till I came on duty. That means that there is no one within a hundred miles of them excepting us."

A blast of the rising wind in the rigging set the same old tune to clattering. *Weight 220 pounds; wanted for piracy; a seaman for the last twenty years.* Drake, waiting impatiently for orders, rattled his key.

"Tell them that this is only a tramp freighter, not much at speed, but that we'll do our best."

Duffy received no orders and he needed none. In the general hubbub of rounding up the ship he worked by himself and he made no mistakes. In his hopeless isolation from the verbal fellowship of his mates it seemed as though fate had pityingly given him a special sense which put him into possession of their thoughts without the medium of words. With the first shifting of the helm he fell easily into his place and did his work like a huge machine which meshes unerringly with the driving cogs.

Barclay was touched with a sense of compassion for this man whose sense of duty might be leading him to the doom of a felon. Duffy's arms were like ship's cables and his hair was sandy. He would certainly suffer for the likeness. Did he bear the scar? He called a common seaman to him, a big-hearted Irishman who always spoke kindly to this language-alien as though he could understand.

"Mike," he asked, "did you ever see Duffy's chest?"

"Divil a glimpse of it. He always wore his jacket buttoned toit."

"Then Mike, would you just try to see it once; if it bears a scar?"

"Sure, Captain; it bein' your wish, whin he's dead; but divil a bit afore."

The man would have dared the maintop in the midst of an Indian typhoon and the captain knew it. Duffy, plucking at his sleeve, brought the colloquy to an end. He thrust into Barclay's hand a frantic call to Drake from the distressed ship:

> **For God's sake put on all the steam you've got. We're sinking, and there's women and children aboard.**

Sinking! And with all those intervening miles of water; fifteen,

as the wind sweeps, but more than twice that as the *Eclipse* would have to go. Sully's Channel, one of the unchartered mysteries of the South Pacific, lay between them, a belt of rocks, a network of countering currents, a whirlpool of foam and swirling waters. Across the port bow of the *Eclipse* her crew could already see in the distance this white line that encircled the summit of these ocean crags as though they were capped with perpetual snow. Ahead, miles and miles till it hit the horizon, stretched a cold and merciless expanse which bore no sign of hope or of compassion; and somewhere, out if its midst, calling to them frantically for help, a ship was sinking—women and children trembling, crowding together, saying goodbye to loved ones and to life; the only solid thing in all that wilderness of waters settling, slowly sinking beneath their feet. They knew that help was coming—help and life on leaden wings—but what did that avail them, caught as they were already in the taunting grasp of death? Perhaps they could even see the black columns of smoke that rolled up from the freighter as it pounded heavily along to their rescue; still they were sinking, settling, slipping away from hope. The consciousness of it all became unendurable to Captain Barclay, standing alone on the bridge, and he left his place for the deck among his men.

"Is there one of you who knows the passage through those reefs? Have any of you been through? It would shorten our course by thirty miles."

The men turned from him to that carpet of white death in sullen wonder. The idea was absurd.

"Perhaps I could; I'll try. I've done it before, in a smoother sea."

Barclay whirled toward the voice. Before him, sandy hair, arms —stripped for battle with the ocean, now—like a ship's cable, weight 220 pounds at least; and across the massive chest—bared also for the struggle—a livid scar; Duffy, wanted for piracy—and the gallows.

Somewhere, in the great books of the hereafter, the record may be written of an instant's doubt; of a moment of wonder what this desperate man's purpose might be in taking upon himself so readily the destinies of them all. But with the supreme hour which sometime enters into every human life, comes an uplifting of the soul which shakes its wrinkled edges clear and triumphs over doubt. In this dramatic hour of Duffy's life he stood transformed, facing his captain. And Barclay, in unworthy guilt, withered self-condemned;

it seemed such a heartless thing to accept the service of this man's noblest impulse to his own undoing.

"I know; I read the messages." Duffy's voice was low, but wonderfully steady, and the voice of command. "You've done your duty; I'll do mine. There are women and children over there, you know."

The broad back squared away, toward the wheel, Barclay staring at it in his astonishment, like a schoolboy gaping at the wonders of a show. This man whom they had despised and pitied as a thing but little removed from a beast, had been transformed by a voice of human agony out of the clouds until he stood, a king, above them all, though wanted for piracy, perhaps for murder.

Duffy, sauntering over to the wheel, caught it between his powerful hands and twirled it watchfully, as though a little suspicious of its strength although perfectly confident of his own. The prow of the ship responded steadily to his pressure until she was presently nosing into the edge of the hissing broth. The smoothly laid muscles bulged and knotted heavily as the rudder swung grudgingly half way upon its heavy post, then, balked by the strain against it, hung sullen, as though uncertain which was in mastery, the man or the thwarting current.

The chains groaned in their channels, but the man won. He set his feet determinedly against the timbered frame and, putting his shoulder to the wheel, strained against it till the blood that was in his heart slipped into the veins of his face and turned them purple. The current gradually yielded, though, and the ship slipped through the precarious passage between two bellowing rocks, then swung almost as upon a pivot and plunged like a mill race with the gates wide open, smooth, swift, irresistible, and with the same whirlpool of chaos at the end. But he passed it in safety and, as they came into the comparatively smooth waters of the lagoon, leaned heavily, somewhat out of breath, against the stanchion.

Around them, cutting off the blue-grey horizon of the sea, was an unbroken wall of shifting white. Even the passage through which they had just entered seemed to have been closed behind them and they were prisoners of the deep, from which they were cut off by a belt-line of its own fiercest handiwork. It was as though some ocean genie had enticed them into an enchanted dungeon and then rolled the water-cliff into place across their track.

"It's like a solid wall. Is there no opening?" Barclay asked, sweeping the skyline in vain for a break in the boiling curd.

A smile curved the lip of the face that was pressed so hard against the wheel but the eyes never shifted from the path of the ship.

"There's an outlet, though it's a desperate run in a sea like this," he answered, and then added: "I've shook the *Caledonia* off my heels through here a score of times under the black flag. She was hunting me here when she struck. Look yonder."

"Yonder" at first seemed only a continuation of the ragged wall, but as they approached, it opened into two parallel lines, one just within the other, and a precarious passage valleyed out between them.

Duffy, flushed, steaming, and somewhat winded, bent easily over his task, and spun the wheel, as though testing it, between his big hands, while they slid across the lagoon of placid waters where a fishing smack might defy the navies of the world. As he rounded the point, though, and sent the *Eclipse* plunging full speed ahead into the mouth of the channel, a groan of horrified amazement welled up from those hardy followers of the sea, at the sight before them. It was magnificent; it was appalling; as if the maelstroms of heaven had been driven like a wedge into this crevice of the rocks with the desperate purpose of splitting the earth into halves by the churning force of frantic waters. Somewhere ahead of them, from outside, the gale was piling furious wave upon wave into that narrow cañon with a force that nothing could resist; hurling, driving, mauling them against the combing rocks that tore and ground them into a seething basin of froth.

Duffy, his bare back tense and rigid under the gathering sinews, looked into the throat which lay beyond these dragon jaws before him, with a face that was flushed a little but a heart that did not quail.

"I'll do my best," he said to the captain, "but it may not be enough. I've been through here more than any living man, I guess, but never before in a gale like this, and it's madness to try. To-morrow—but there are women and children over there."

The big arms stiffened. With a lurch of his body the wheel came over and only the grumbling chain as it rasped in the channel told the story of the effort, but the ship swung a couple of points and merely grazed a submerged rock that lay in its path; then it lifted viciously into the air as it tilted across another that would have split it from end to end in that awful current except for the uncertain cushion of water that carried her over on its crest. It

was skill, it was courage, it was daring supreme; but most of all it was the cool, calculating judgment of the man at the wheel, who never once lacked in his confidence that those splendid sinews of his were ready to do his bidding.

Once the vessel pitched desperately across the channel and aimed a glancing blow fair at the murderous cliff; a twist of the hand on the wheel shot her back like a chastened school boy, full speed ahead. Once a piled-up wall of waves struck her aslant and bore down upon her until her funnels threatened to submerge; the same hand brought her sternly back to her job, rebuked and humbled.

In the very midst of the channel, as they bent their way among its curves, an avalanche of foam told them all too well of the doom that lay for them below the surface. For one brief instant Duffy faltered. Had his nerve deserted him at last? The cords of muscles on his arms assembled into ponderous ropes. He breathed deeply of the spray-padded air, clasped both hands tightly across the wheel and drew it steadily toward him. It turned obediently enough, then hung rigid and motionless; he might as well have wasted his strength upon the cliff itself. The veins of his neck filled up and choked, almost to bursting. His face went red, then purple; every muscle in his powerful body seemed straining, ready to snap, as he tugged and hurled his strength against that of the sea —in vain. The sweat was rolling down his back in smoking streams, and those who watched forgot the issue that was being fought out in savage admiration for the courage of the man; then they saw the mighty shoulder take the place of the hands upon the straining metal; saw the rim buried slowly into the flesh until the muscles fairly closed about it; saw this desperate man who had been invincible through the twenty years of his savage career fighting, balked, but still refusing to yield.

Never before had he really cared, excepting with that wild revelry of brute obstinacy that chafes at being defeated. He cared now, but not for himself; not for the men on the deck so near him; but for those despairing women and children calling to him for help somewhere out of the waters ahead. And he conquered. Surely, steadily, though torturously slow, the rudder burrowed its way into the dashing current; the boat swerved in its course a little and cleared destruction by a hair; but the cheer that began on the captain's own lips barely reached Duffy's ears before it died. As they rounded the point and faced the open sea again the *Caledonia,*

wounded unto death and breaking rapidly across, lay in full view, a little to port, hard on a reef.

All that had been dared was useless. So near the wreck that they could see the appealing faces turned hopefully toward them, the *Eclipse* now rode in comparatively smooth water in the lee of the cliff; but roaring between them was a cauldron of white foam, a ledge of rocks that no ship could cross and live. Even Duffy's head shook hopelessly in answer to the captain's glance; there was no passage.

"The waves have pounded her fairly over the reef," he said. "It's cut off her bottom clean as a knife and when she slides clear, in a couple of minutes, she'll go down like a plummet."

Upon the *Caledonia's* decks frantic women and children—only a few, thank God—could be seen, facing with the men the doom that could not be escaped. The sight was maddening to those hardy seamen, inured as they were to every form of hardship and accustomed to danger, now face to face with death for some one other than themselves and compelled to look on in helpless idleness. They clustered about their captain, white-lipped and low-voiced, discussing their fruitless plans.

"Lower away, lads, and keep the life lines clear."

From the port davits of the *Eclipse* a boat, full rigged and ready for desperate service, swung out over the rail. The oars were already in their places—an instant would unship them—and swinging idly from the stern, two lines, the life-threads for two score of people, dangled in preliminary repose; while in the extreme prow, erect and commanding, stood Duffy. His head was bare, and as he lifted one of his mighty arms in signal, a break in the clouds permitted the sun to rest for a minute full upon him and gild the silhouetted figure like a golden statue of hope done in heroic size. Duffy turned his face to the light as though he would kiss this omen of success, his face transformed with a smile of confident repose. Then, as the boat shot down and bumped into the sea, the idle statue became an infuriated tiger, struggling madly for its own. *Arms like a ship's cable*—arms trebly wanted now as inch by inch they conquered the swirling waters and carried those feeble threads of hope in safety toward the wreck.

Just how it occurred no one could ever remember. With most of the channel behind him and under the lee of the wreck, some irresistible current caught up the boat, and against it even Duffy's great arms failed. He struggled desperately for every inch, though,

but was carried, like a chip, upon the crest of the wave and hurled against a reef almost directly under the *Caledonia's* settling stern. His boat was crushed, a feather in a cyclone, but his head came bobbing to the surface and he caught the line, though somewhat heavily, that was thrown to him, and was dragged up over the side of the sinking ship. As he climbed over the rail he waved, like a banner of victory, those precious life lines he had clung to and had dared so much to carry across; but the cheer that sprang up was hushed to a prayer. As he staggered over to the mast and began to lash the lines into place it was seen that he was covered with blood and badly wounded.

It was the wound that puts heart into the lion, though, while it partially cripples the body. With one arm broken and useless and his great chest drenched with blood Duffy still worked, a whirlwind of muscle and action, side by side with the officer who was there to take him back to the gallows. There was a mutual glance of recognition; then those two servants of such countering destinies, erstwhile, but in this hour heroic moved by a common purpose, fell together upon the line that was rushing their comrades one by one above the boiling waters to safety. Not a word was spoken between them but all around were turbulent voices: the roar of destruction, the shriek of defeated waves. Most of the rigging had gone by the board and every lurch of the ship, as she lifted and fell, was tolled off by the cry of breaking timbers and grinding plates. The *Caledonia's* stern was steadily settling as her broken back doubled down across the comb of the reef upon which she lay.

"It's the last trip." The *Caledonia's* captain spoke. "She is sliding clear now, and will go straight down. Which of you two will go, boys; which one stays here with me? Be quick, one of you —and goodbye."

Duffy looked about in surprise. He had not realized how fast the work was being done until he now saw that the shipwrecked castaways, so recently at his side, were looking back at him across the channel from the *Eclipse;* that there was with him the officer whose hand was almost touching his and the captain, sentenced by a tradition of the sea to go down with his ship. The iron under his feet dropped suddenly, a foot or more, and slid a little back on the reef; something in his soul rose up—perhaps the old spirit of lawlessness and mutiny was upon him. He seized the captain about the middle with his sound arm and dragged him toward the

ropes. The man fought honestly for his tradition and struck out with both hands, but the struggle was brief for a giant like Duffy and, swinging his man clear of the deck, he dumped him bodily into his place in the buoy and shot him forward on the run, out over the boiling waters to his comrades. The buoy made the trip and the return as quickly as human hands could drag it but in the interval, brief as it was, the *Caledonia's* prow had doubled down like a knife blade and slid from the reef into the sea, while the stern, still swinging, but almost clear, dipped at a sharp angle and began to grate over the supporting rock as it scraped across to its final plunge.

For one fateful moment they hung back together, those two heroes; the one a servant all his life to duty, the other a slave to his every passing impulse. Then Duffy laid his heavy arm—the arm that was wanted for piracy though it was now red with a hero's blood—across the shoulders of the officer and drew him firmly toward the ropes. As he did so the sun burst for another moment through a break in the clouds and threw its shining mantle, like a halo of glory, over the blood-stained figure, dressing it again in gold. It mellowed the stern, gnarled face and touched the proud soul back if it. Duffy drew himself up to his full height, in that hour heroic, and looked the officer squarely in the face.

"Go back to the boys," he said, "and speak a kind word to them for me if you feel like it. Most of them over yonder know that I lived like a dog; go back and tell them that I died like a man."

Oh, Rabbit Tracks!*

BY ROBERT C. MC ELRAVY

R. SAMUEL TINNEY and his wife were on the train, speeding rapidly into the country for a week-end with the Fannings. Mr. Tinney was nervously reading the third afternoon edition of the evening paper. He was following the exciting man-hunt by the police for Snap Johnson, the gentleman porch climber who had recently escaped from prison and was again plying his profession. Mr. Tinney was nervous for the reason that Snap Johnson looked so much like himself that he might have been his twin brother.

"I hope the police succeed in getting that fellow," he murmured to himself for the hundredth time. "I never can have an easy moment while he is at large."

He continued reading the paper and very soon forgot the matter entirely. But Mrs. Tinney was suddenly startled by an exclamation from her spouse.

"Oh, rabbit tracks!" he spluttered, dejectedly.

"What is the matter, Samuel?" asked Mrs. Tinney, knowing from past experience that this exclamation usually indicated great mental distress on the part of her husband.

"I've forgotten the silverware we were going to bring the Fannings."

His wife thought a moment. "You must go back for it, Samuel. You can come up on a later train; they run every hour."

Mr. Tinney got off at the next station and took the first train back to the city.

He then took a car to his own home, several miles distant, which he reached just about dusk.

On the front steps he paused to whistle. "Oh, rabbit tracks! My wife borrowed my keys to unlock her suit case and hasn't returned them!"

He fumbled with the door, which of course would not open, and

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then went round the house. A side window yielded to his persuasions and he crept inside.

After ransacking numerous drawers and upsetting things generally, he found the box of silver knives and forks they intended presenting to their country friends.

With a sigh of relief Mr. Tinney turned and proceeded to back out of the window. He had no hint of what was coming.

Officer Jake Hudson, a new man on that beat, was waiting patiently for him, with a drawn revolver.

"This is pretty soft, Snap Johnson. You're a bold one, sure enough, but you're up against it now. Got th' goods right on you, too!"

Mr. Tinney laughed, conquering a wild desire to run.

"What's the matter, officer? This is my home. I live here. I'm Samuel Tinney. You would know me if you weren't a new man on this beat."

Mr. Tinney had a sense of humor. The circumstance was very amusing to him for a moment. But when he felt the cool, restraining influence of a couple of handcuffs on his wrists, the fun in the situation quickly departed.

At the corner the officer rang for a patrol wagon. Little Ruth Perkins, daughter of Mr Tinney's next door neighbor, came along, and stood with wide eyes watching the proceeding.

"That child knows me, officer."

The policeman turned a wise and appraising eye upon his captive.

"I s'pose she does. You're quite a prominent man, you are."

"He—he looks like Mr. Tinney," said the child, with just enough hesitation to render her testimony worthless.

The patrol wagon came and Mr. Tinney was whisked to the station.

Here he was interrogated by the officer in charge and told the truth so neatly and completely that nobody believed it. His name was placed on the blotter, and as he was led away to a cell in the jail, he saw a number of fellow officers shake hands with Jake Hudson. He also heard them compliment Jake on his good work in bringing in a badly wanted man.

Mr. Tinney explained his predicament volubly to the jailer. That functionary listened patiently. He said Mr. Tinney would no doubt be allowed to telegraph his wife at some future time. At present, would he like some clam chowder and a cup of coffee?

Mr. Tinney cursed inwardly and went on a hunger strike, for which he was sorry later, as it had been a long time since he had dined.

The other prisoners were congenial. One of them greeted him cordially as Snap Johnson, the notorious man for whom he had been mistaken. "Dis is the woist jail I was ever in, Snap; no accommodations whatever," confided the fellow. Mr. Tinney groaned.

At seven o'clock he was taken out of the cell and led to a private room, where the chief of police and other officers were gathered. They looked him over and compared his features with those of a photograph of Snap Johnson.

"Not a very doubtful case, is it?" murmured the chief, urbanely. The other officers smiled.

A subordinate looked over a chart and removed Mr. Tinney's outer apparel. Some measurements were taken and with each one of them the group of officers smiled more broadly. There was almost a perfect check in each case.

Mr. Tinney, who had made several vain attempts to protest, submitted to each indignity as calmly as possible.

He put his thumb on a piece of blackened paper. The officers looked at the impression and compared it with the record of Snap Johnson's thumb.

"Been cutting your thumb, have you?" asked the chief, grasping Mr. Tinney's thumb and looking at its uneven surface.

"My thumb has been scarred that way for years," said Mr. Tinney. "I hurt it when I was a boy."

The officer laughed good naturedly.

"I'm curious to see him with his hair off," said one of them, again looking at the photograph of Snap Johnson. The chief thought a moment and then told the assistant to get the clippers.

Mr. Tinney was placed in a chair and listened more in sorrow than in anger as the clippers accomplished their havoc with his splendid crop of hair. When he was bald as an ostrich egg, the officers again compared him with the photograph and pronounced their work good.

"Give him some other clothes, temporarily," said the chief. "We'll want to go through these carefully."

Mr. Tinney was soon garbed in an old suit of clothes, which looked as though it had done much temporary service with prisoners.

"I have only one request," said Mr. Tinney, as the chief turned to go. "May I telegraph my wife?"

The officer turned with a broad smile. "Certainly, my boy, you can telegraph to the Colonial Dames or the Ladies' Aid Society if you have the money."

Mr. Tinney sat down and wrote a long and pathetic night letter to his wife.

This over with, he went back to his cell and tried to sleep. But he lay awake and listened to the snoring of several prisoners who were not disturbed with consciences so pure and unsullied as his own and were not worried by their surroundings to the point of insomnia.

He heard the night shift come on and listened to the clatter of policemen coming in and going out of the station.

About three o'clock he heard something which roused him completely from all thoughts of slumber. A number of officers came bounding in from the patrol wagon out in front, leading a fresh prisoner with them.

Mr. Tinney listened carefully to the buzz of voices in the adjoining room and gathered, not without some interest, that the prisoner was one Snap Johnson.

"His name's already on the blotter," said the night sergeant. "An arrest was made early this evening, purporting to be that of Snap Johnson."

There was an excited colloquy, during which Mr. Tinney was forced to smile in spite of his predicament. Everything would be all right in the morning, except—he rubbed his bald head dubiously.

The iron door of the big cell opened and the new prisoner was thrust inside. He looked about curiously, and Mr. Tinney saw his eyes rest on himself.

Then the light was taken away and Mr. Tinney felt, rather than saw, Snap Johnson lie down upon a blanket near him.

The prisoners began stirring rather early in the morning. Coffee and rolls were served at eight o'clock and Mr. Tinney indulged this time, though not without some qualms. The real Snap Johnson sat placidly near him, eating his portion with undisturbed countenance.

Mr. Tinney looked at him with decided interest. Bald, like himself, with the same dark eyes and sizable nose, there certainly was a strong resemblance. Even Mr. Tinney was forced to admit this fact.

The time passed slowly and the new prisoner presently engaged

Mr. Tinney in conversation. For this the latter was not altogether sorry, as his double with the criminal instincts was of course interesting to him. He even narrated, with an effort at good feeling, the circumstances under which he had been arrested. Snap Johnson listened to this and chaffed him good naturedly. Even his voice sounded like his own, Mr. Tinney decided.

At ten o'clock there was a stir in the adjoining room. Mr. Tinney heard a woman's voice talking excitedly. "That's Julia!" he exclaimed, rising and going forward to the barred door eagerly.

Snap Johnson also approached the door with a certain show of interest.

In another moment Mrs. Tinney came to the cell door, accompanied by the chief and his retinue of officers.

Mr. Tinney reached his hands out through the door. "Julia!" he cried in delighted tones.

His wife came close up to him. She noted his garb, his bald head and unshaven face. He was not an attractive sight.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, drawing instinctively back.

The jailer unlocked the door.

"Bring 'em both out," said the chief. "Be careful now, Mrs. Tinney. Don't make any mistakes."

Mr. Tinney and Snap Johnson were led forth. The latter had also had been given a temporary jail garb, but had shaved the evening before.

Mrs. Tinney, noticing her husband's outstretched arms, was about to fly to him. But the chief's words had disturbed her and she looked a moment toward Snap Johnson. That gentleman's face was a study in grief-stricken anguish. But he did not stir toward her. His lips moved painfully and he said only one reproachful word: "Julia!"

Mrs. Tinney, bursting into uncontrollable tears, swept without further words into Snap Johnson's arms.

Mr. Tinney, horrified by this unexpected action on his wife's part, protested violently. He raved madly, but one of the officers laid a restraining hand upon him. "Keep quiet, you!" came the single admonition, and Mr. Tinney, feeling the ponderous grip upon his arm, kept quiet.

Snap Johnson, presently releasing himself from Mrs. Tinney's grasp, moved toward an officer approaching with some clothing on his arm. "I'll take those," he said quietly.

Mr. Tinney, stunned by this bold effrontery, could not find his

voice for a moment. When he did, he announced weakly: "Those are my clothes."

"Shut up!" exclaimed the officer holding him, and Mr. Tinney again became silent.

Snap Johnson retired to a private room with the clothes and presently returned, attired in Mr. Tinney's apparel. He smiled Mr. Tinney's smile, in spite of the fact that he had never even seen one on that gentleman's face. He had, however, copied several of Mr. Tinney's mannerisms, demonstrating his readiness as a mimic as well as a crook.

If Mrs. Tinney had ever doubted for a moment that Snap Johnson was really her husband, she did not doubt it now. Her smile was fairly radiant as he came forward, neatly garbed and with a hat surmounting his bald head.

But the chief was not entirely satisfied with the situation yet.

"Did your husband ever hurt his right thumb, madam?" he asked perfunctorily.

Mrs. Tinney thought a moment. "I believe he did have an accident of some kind when he was younger."

The chief stepped toward Snap Johnson, watching him closely. "Let me see your hand," he commanded.

Snap Johnson, smiling placidly, stuck out his right hand for examination. There was a small scar across the ball of the thumb.

Mr. Tinney pressed forward eagerly.

"*My* thumb is scarred," he announced triumphantly.

The chief glanced at him menacingly. "I s'pose it is. You probably didn't lose a minute chopping it up after your Bertillion was taken."

Again a dull silence fell upon Mr. Tinney. He saw the chief give Snap Johnson a final approving glance; saw the latter bend smilingly toward Mrs. Tinney—his own dear Julia!—and watched them turn away, after a single commiserating glance in his direction. This, then, was justice! Snap Johnson, notorious crook and consummate actor, was to go free, while he, Samuel Tinney, an honest man, was to lie here and answer for the rascal's crimes! Once without the station Snap Johnson would again be outside the clutches of the law. He could desert Mrs. Tinney at any moment and lose himself in the great city.

Then another appalling thought came to Mr. Tinney. Suppose this fellow decided to keep up the deception? Suppose he went to Mr. Tinney's home and palmed himself off as Mr. Tinney,

eating Mr. Tinney's meals and living upon Mr. Tinney's generous income?

As these black thoughts came to Mr. Tinney, his wife and her pseudo husband shook hands with the chief and made ready to leave.

Snap Johnson was alert and eager now; he moved toward the door as though on springs. Mrs. Tinney looked up at him curiously. Her bosom rose and fell as though she might be shaken by sudden doubts. Like Lot's wife, she could not resist one backward look.

As she turned, a look of fear flashed into the eyes of Snap Johnson. He drew himself up quickly and sprang for the door. But an officer, equally ready, barred the way, and he fell back into the arms of the chief himself.

"What's wrong?" came the question from several voices at once.

"I—I think there's been a mistake somewhere," faltered Mrs. Tinney. She looked again toward the dejected figure now being led to the cell again. A single heart-felt exclamation came wafting back to her from that figure.

"Oh, rabbit tracks!"

"Yes, I know there has been a mistake!" cried Mrs. Tinney, and she rushed back and threw her arms about the real Mr. Tinney.

The Death Dodger*

BY HORACE RICE HARRIS

leaden sky became black; glistening sidewalks turned glassy; dripping eaves formed icicles; a raw atmosphere grew penetratingly cold; arc lights buzzed and broke into brilliancy.

Mobe Ryson shivered. His coat and trousers were shiny and thin. The tops of his shoes had survived and he wore socks, but they had holes. The frozen slush cut his feet. His hat had been a black felt. It was now a rusty rag.

Mobe shivered, blinked, and forced to his face a smile, which once there, was cheerful, and made one forget his blue nose and watery red-rimmed eyes. Mobe's smile, when he was alone, sometimes became whimsical, and, on occasions, even a little bitter, but in company it was always bright and brave. Mobe's smile had stood much strain and stress of which his present plight was only an incident, a mere passing annoyance. It had never failed nor faded. Mobe had smiled through the smoke of his own revolver at the writhing of Officer McGann; smiled because he had beaten McGann to the draw. He had smiled at the judge who sentenced him to the chair. That he had smiled at locks and bars, the warden of a state penitentiary could testify.

Mobe fumbled a benumbed hand in his trousers pocket and drew forth a shiny dime. He pulled his cap down over his eyes, distorted his features, and slunk into Hogan's Club.

"Couple o' suds," he mumbled hoarsely, as he tossed the ten-cent piece to the bartender.

He drank the two glasses of beer, one after the other, in one breath each. Then he turned to the free-lunch counter and ate ravenously. He noticed a bouncer glowering at his devouring appetite but paid no heed. Presently, satiated and warmed within by the malt-liquor, he looked up mockingly at the resentful bouncer and—made a direful mistake. He smiled.

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Instantly Crouse and Renks, stool pigeon and plain-clothes man respectively, recognized Mobe, and simultaneously visions of the ten thousand golden dollars on Ryson's head flashed across the minds of the two men.

Hogan's Club was a decidedly inconvenient place for an arrest by any less than the whole strong-arm squad. Some five weeks previous to this night the mutilated bodies of Detectives Randon and Clancy were found floating in the East river. They had been sent from headquarters after Red Zimmerman, who had been reported hiding at Hogan's Club.

The expressionless faces of Crouse and Renks gave no sign of their discovery. They looked at one another as if casually. Renks finished his beer, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and shuffled out of the saloon. Crouse ordered a whiskey, drank it, put down his glass, and turned toward the lunch counter. Here he faced Ryson, and as he looked into Mobe's eyes his features simulated surprise and pleasure. But he quickly chased this mask from his face and pretended suddenly to remember that he must be cautious not to reveal Mobe's identity to those around. He drew Mobe aside and asked him 'why in hell' he had come back to New York. He thrust a two-dollar bill in Mobe's hand and gave him his (Crouse's) address. As if by an after-thought Crouse suggested that they go to his abode for a little chat about a certain 'job'.

Mobe followed Crouse through the doors. The two had made their way some three blocks and were just opposite an alley when Mobe suddenly turned and struck Crouse back of the ear with a short, leaded rubber club produced from up his sleeve. Mobe had understood the stool pigeon.

Mobe quickly rifled the pockets of the unconscious man and dragged him into the black night of the alley. Then, without a glance at the huddled form, he took to the street again.

The crusted ice bit cruelly into the soles of his unprotected feet and the piercing cold wind penetrated his thin garments so that his flesh became fairly blue. Still he flitted like a bat from shadow to shadow, and one without the eyes of an owl would know of his presence only by the occasional faint crunching of the ice beneath his tread.

He was under the "L" and almost breathing freely when the shrill blast of a police whistle startled him to instant flight. Three flashes numbered his pursuers before the well-nigh simultaneous reports reached Mobe's ears. None of them fired a second time, for

he had vanished with the thin smoke of their automatics. Overhead a train dashed by in a rumbling rush. When it was gone the three men whispered together by one of the big pillars of the "L".

A half a block away the sleepy chauffeur of a belated empty taxicab became suddenly aware of something hard pressed against his left side. This was the first intimation that someone shared the front seat with him.

"Turn left next block, then speed 'er. Squeal an' I croak yer."

The driver needed no coaxing. The taxicab rattled and jolted along at a good thirty-mile clip until they reached Broadway.

"Right." Mobe emphasized the command with a nudge.

Up through the wholesale and business district, up to Manhattan's winking white night, sped the car.

"'Left," Mobe directed at 52nd Street, and at Eighth Avenue and 52nd Street the driver found the seat beside him empty.

A few hundred feet beyond the spot where Mobe had slipped noiselessly from his seat beside the chauffeur, one of the three men who had whispered together by a big pillar of the "L" down in the East Side, dropped from the rear of the taxicab just quitted by Ryson and rolled to the gutter. It was Renks.

Mobe glided along to Broadway. There he turned up toward Columbus Circle. Renks followed.

There was a skyscraper in construction. The steel skeleton reached many stories above the already bricked walls. The floors were in up to the top of the structure and ladders led from floor to floor. Mobe entered the building. Renks, now accompanied by an officer, watched him climb the ladder leading to the second floor. Mobe waited for several minutes and then made his way up the ladder leading to the third floor. Hence he climbed higher and higher until he had passed ten stories. In the dim light from the flare of Broadway, with all the care and caution of the far-northern hunter of the silver fox, the two men mounted after him.

Mobe was just relaxing his bone-tired body on a bed of gunny sacks when he caught the gleam of an eye peering over the head of the ladder which he had climbed to this floor. Immediately he was on his feet and rushing toward the rear of the building. Renks scrambled after him only to sink to his knees in horror as Mobe leapt wildly from the unwalled floor straight out into the blackness of the eleven-story drop.

The two shaken men made their way down the ladders as fast as their unstrung nerves would allow and hastened around the

skyscraper to gather up Mobe Ryson's poor crushed remains. They found the remains—of a smoldering gunny sack.

A glance overhead explained. High above, where ribs of the great building were still growing, a derrick stretched out its strong arm to hoist the huge girders to place. The cable of the derrick extended to the ground. As Mobe jumped out into the air he had grasped the cable and, using part of his intended couch as a wheelless trolley, had slid to the ground unhurt except for a pair of scorched hands. The friction had fired the gunny sack.

A black sky became a radiant blue; glassy sidewalks began to steam; icicles started dripping; a freezing atmosphere turned moderately warm; the sun blazed with blinding splendor.

Mobe Ryson blinked, rubbed his eyes, and yawned. He looked around his bed chamber, the public bathroom of a West 60th Street boarding house, whither he had crept unobserved the night before, but he saw nothing available to him in any way. He stood up, stretched himself, and, carefully unlocking the door, stole down the hall and out the front entrance.

Mobe walked deliberately up to Broadway and started down town on the great thoroughfare. The headlines on a newspaper, "Ryson Grins Again," caught his eye. He stopped and, with his hands in his pockets, stood reading the paper, which topped one of the piles of dailies arranged on the sidewalk by the newsboy.

Suddenly there was a rumbling sound on a roof above, and a large piece of ice bounded over the eaves and came gyrating and flashing in the sunlight in its dash to the ground. At a cry of warning, Mobe looked up in time to catch the jagged mass full in the forehead.

The doctor shook his head at the pitying faces of those crowded around. "Poor devil, he's done for."

"By a chunk of ice, too, Doc, *me* by a chunk of *ice!*" murmured Mobe as his face broke into his wonderful smile and his soul went out to solve the Great Mystery.

Jones, of the "World," started in amazement.

"Who is he?" queried the man standing next to him.

"Why," replied the reporter still gazing in astonishment at the glazing eyes, "why, one of the greatest criminals on the police records. It is Mobe Ryson."

"And," mused Jones, "they called him the Death Dodger."

Across the Airshaft*

BY CHARLES EDWARD DANIELL

EAVESDROPPING? Not a bit of it! We should have blushed hotly at the very thought. But did our pretty neighbor across the way imagine she owned the exclusive visual right of our airshaft? Were we to lose the use of one of our best rooms and the solitary ray of sunlight that winked down to us on pleasant days through a brick slit in the heavens, because she chose to sit persistently by her open window and discuss her most intimate affairs with her husband? It seemed to us as flatly unfair! Why should they assume that our curtains would always be prudently drawn and that we were indifferent to the narrow view across our contracted whitewashed area—our only outlook? Or take it for granted that we lacked interest in the rattling ash man, tinkling scissors grinder, and raucous-voiced old clothes dealers, who infested the courtyard below; not to mention the swarm of musical prodigies of both sexes who pursued us and carolled pathetically about home and mother?

"It seems to me, Robert," suggested Lucy, "that they must think everybody around here is stone deaf."

It certainly looked that way. On summer evenings Jim would arrive home promptly at six o'clock, and after a leisurely dinner, every dish of which we knew the life-history, he'd work himself into a lounging coat and, with a cigar in his mouth, drop into an easy chair beside their only other window on the airshaft and megaphonically review the day's work. He was a good-natured, dark-complexioned chap with a sharp "carrying" voice, and, as we soon learned, a rising young lawyer in a downtown office. But what we didn't hear about that office and its legal affiliations with John Doe and Richard Roe certainly must have escaped Jim's memory. And when, as regretfully happened, Miss Georgianna Perkins, daughter of the senior partner, ran away with her father's chauffeur, we followed the elopement through the newspapers with an absorbing interest and concern, as keen as that of her dearest friends.

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And so, as time elapsed, we became, so to speak, members of our neighbors' family circle. I know it sounds dreadful! But what were we to do? Were we to be debarred the use of our sitting room because they chose to vociferate their private affairs to the only shred of landscape the Lord and the landlord had vouchsafed us? Such stony insensibility to their surroundings pricked our pride and self-respect. Our consciences congealed, and therefore, up to the time of the murder, we smothered every compunction and shamelessly listened.

One evening, on my return home, Lucy met me at the door with blazing, terror-stricken eyes.

"Oh, Robert!" she exclaimed breathlessly, "something terrible has happened. It's—it's—I believe there's been a murder!"

I gazed at her in puzzled amazement.

"A murder! Where?" I cried. Then realizing it was probably nothing more than an imaginary fright, I led her to a chair.

"Compose yourself," I said, "and tell me all about it."

She shuddered perceptibly and gazed wildly about. "Oh, it was dreadful, Robert! I know it was a murder! I heard loud voices—screams—and then I heard her fall! Oh, that thud—it was sickening!"

"When?" I exclaimed, "where?"

"Across the airshaft!" she gasped. "The Megaphones!" (We had long since named them the Megaphones.) "They've killed Aunt Julia!"

For a moment I stood stunned and bewildered.

"Impossible!" I said. "There is some mistake."

"No, no," she protested. "I heard it. Jim yelled at her furiously. I heard him call her an 'old fool' and then she fell! Oh, it was horrible! Afterwards they closed the windows."

I walked across the room and looked out on the airshaft. Sure enough, our neighbors were sealed up as tight as a drum, the shades carefully drawn.

"It's some mistake," I said soothingly. "It couldn't be a murder, you know. Jim is loud-voiced but hardly a criminal, and as for Dolly—"

"Oh, no, of course," Lucy broke in excitedly. "Dolly screamed too—shrieked—and then a crowd collected in front of the house and a policeman came in. I heard him talk threateningly to Jim, and they went off together. Then an ambulance drove up and they took Aunt Julia away. I saw the body go out the front door on a stretcher. Oh, I nearly fainted!"

"Well, well," I said, reassuringly, "we'll know all about it tomorrow. Every newspaper in New York will probably have a reporter up here microscoping the neighborhood. But it isn't a murder. Why, Lucy," (the sheer absurdity of it suddenly struck me) "you know as well as I that Jim and Dolly are both down in Aunt Julia's will for $10,000 apiece. They've talked it over enough, Heaven knows, and—"

"That's the reason I thought he might possibly—"

"Pooh!" I scouted, "don't be silly, dear. There isn't the shadow of a possibility of it. Jim isn't vicious. Besides, he's a lawyer and a conservative one, too, if I'm any judge. He never would disgrace the family. Why! Think of the killing shock it would be to that little white-haired mother up in Westbrook! And Judge Cross! Imagine the harrowing news reaching him and his Arabella, away on their honeymoon! Or the terrible stigma that would be forced on their cousin, Harry Cummings! Clara's love could scarcely sustain a shock like that, I fancy. No, no, it's all unthinkable."

"Oh, I hope so!" moaned Lucy. "It doesn't seem reasonable, I know. And there is Minna Brown and her new baby; I thought of her at once. I suppose I'm a fool, but— Oh! It gave me such a scare!"

But strange to say the mystery refused to clear up. For a week we bought every newspaper we could lay our hands on, and searched breathlessly for news relating to everybody's and anybody's Aunt Julia, but could find nothing.

That was the last of our friends, the Megaphones. For a considerable time the windows remained closed, the shades tightly drawn. We felt sure they must have moved away, and it was wonderful how we missed them. Something peculiarly intimate seemed to have suddenly jumped out of our lives, leaving us bereft and disconsolate. Then, one day the windows were suddenly thrown up, and we discovered a squad of movers jouncing furniture about in Dolly's sitting room. And a week later, two red-readed boys realized the advantages of our airshaft and spent their days industriously blowing soap bubbles across the area and shooting peas at the cats.

We moved away, too, shortly after, and the mystery of Aunt Julia still persisted in that limbo of unexplained casualties, though we never ceased to wonder how it had all turned out. But one evening as I returned home on the crowded subway, fighting for space to read my paper and curl my toes warily beneath me, I suddenly became sensible that a pushing little person had wormed her way through

the dense mob and was standing triumphantly before me. I glanced up quickly with a touch of irritation, and my eyes met a large, flamboyantly trimmed affair encircling the pretty face of our old friend Dolly Megaphone.

I rose instantly. "Won't you take my seat?" I asked, quite flustered. I could feel the hot blood surging into my cheeks.

She thanked me, smiling pleasantly, and dropped into the vacant place. I hung on to a strap, and hovered above her, too stunned and bewildered to collect my scattered wits for a moment. What a perfectly amazing encounter! Out of New York's congested millions, here, seated calmly before me, was the tantalizing key to our riddle —and what a dainty, charming key she looked to be!

I pretended to be deeply absorbed in my paper, but from the corner of my eye I noticed the simple, unaffected arrangement of the dark, wavy hair; the deep gray eyes, and the half wistful, wholly bewitching expression that hovered about the fine, sensitive mouth. Piquant, was the word I thought best suited her, as now and again I stole a quick, covert glance and my eyes rested for a brief moment on the exquisite little figure. How strange I had never before appreciated the loveliness of our old neighbor!

It seemed horribly hypocritical to stand there in the cold, unfeeling attitude of a perfect stranger, when I was so intimately familiar with her life and habits. An almost uncontrollable desire swept over me to bend forward and make myself known to her; to inquire after Jim, Judge Cross and Arabella, the health of Minna's baby; to say "so delighted to see you again, so glad of this opportunity to ask you whatever in the world became of Aunt Julia, Mrs. —, Mrs. —," and then the exasperating thought came to me that I didn't even know her last name.

As we pulled into the 33rd Street Station, she rose quickly and passed out. The move was so sudden and unexpected, for somehow I had taken it for granted she would go uptown, that I felt a sharp stab of chagrin and disappointment. Involuntarily I turned and had the questionable taste to follow her with my eyes as she tripped along with the platform crowd, and finally disappeared up the stairs. I felt an irritating sense of having been cheated—tricked—on the very eve of discovery, for I convinced myself that I should certainly have spoken to her in a moment more.

"But I don't see why you didn't, Robert!" deplored Lucy with bitter emphasis when I told her about it. "She—"

"My dear girl," I interrupted, "listen to reason. How could I? Could I have said, 'Excuse me, Mrs.—er—I don't know your last

name but I used to live near you, just across the airshaft, you know? I—"

"Pooh!" Lucy broke in scornfully, "isn't that just like a man! Why didn't you say—"

"There wasn't a thing I *could* say," I protested hotly, "can't you see? Even to hint that I lived in such close proximity that I knew the very number of the shoes she wore and her passionate love of Camembert cheese, were hardly facts to gain me a cordial reception. Fancy my position when she turned on me with flaming eyes, as she naturally would, and said, 'Oh ho! a Mr. Eavesdropper eh? No, I don't think I care to know you, sir. Go away, please, or I'll call a policeman.' Besides I didn't know how to address her except as Dolly."

"Isn't it a simple-minded Robert!" Lucy teased. "Such a timid, soulful, tell-it-straight-from-the-heart Robert! Mercy! Is it any wonder we women can twist a dozen of you around our little fingers and watch you squiggle? Of course, you wouldn't have mentioned the foolish old airshaft, silly! What you would have said is, 'I beg your pardon, but I want to inquire about Judge Cross—I'm sure this is his niece—is he quite well?' And she would have replied graciously, thinking you were an old and dear friend of the Judge's. Then you would have asked after Jim; and bye and bye the mystery of Aunt Julia would have been revealed, if you'd used a little sconce."

I stood aghast! Then I raised my hands in consternation. "Judith and Holofernes!" I exclaimed. "Who but a woman could have thought of such dissimulation! And this is my pure-minded, angelic little—; and you would have done that?"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" Lucy replied with airy scorn, arranging the cups on the tea table. "That isn't anything. You wouldn't have told her a lie, would you? And you just had to find out! How stupid you are, Robbie. Men are so—so clumsy."

Time slipped on, inevitably, and fully a year passed away. We neither saw nor heard anything more of the Megaphones. They were lost, like two elusive, tantalizing needles, somewhere in New York's giant haystack. A haunting picture of that winsome little face, however, with its demure, gray eyes, and wavy black hair persistently popped before my mental vision, and I found myself unconsciously scanning the faces of all who passed me. And it was owing to this almost involuntary habit that chance, or fate, finally rewarded my perseverance.

The extraordinary meeting happened in Chicago. I was there on

business, and late one afternoon, on returning to my hotel, I glimpsed a figure ahead of me that seemed unaccountably familiar. It was a brisk, jaunty little person, dressed becomingly in brown, with a saucy red feather in her hat, who tripped along the pavement, perhaps fifty feet away. I quickened my pace, and as I overtook her my curiosity increased. Once she turned and glanced sidewise at a window, and as I caught sight of her glowing face, suspicion gave way to a conviction that I was at last close upon the heels of Dolly Megaphone. My heart gave a quick bound. This time, I vowed, she should not escape me. As I hurried after her, polite addresses and explanations formulated in my teeming brain. Should I approach her honestly and openly, or by Lucy's advice, use duplicity? Suddenly, she paused, as if to cross the street, and in the confusion of the crowded thoroughfare, I lost sight of her, for a brief moment. Then my eye caught the red feather bobbing like a danger signal amid a sea of traffic, out in the middle of the congested avenue. Suddenly, a motor-car shrieked warningly! A cry of terror rang out, and a throng of humanity rushed pell-mell upon the automobile, and then—

I could never tell afterward how I reached her, but the crowd fell aside like ninepins, and the next moment I was kneeling beside her, her head resting on my arm. She was very pale and entirely unconscious. Two policemen arrived on the scene and pressed the throng back. The chauffeur was loud in explanations, and a bright young man was briskly collecting names. Presently, a bell clanged authoritatively, and the crowd made a lane through which a cool, self-possessed surgeon strode into the circle and, dropping on one knee, made a cursory examination.

"M'm—apparently uninjured!" he diagnosed briefly. "Friend of yours?"

"Yes,—that is—she's a New York lady," I stammered. "I'm from New York, myself."

He shot me a quick enigmatic glance. "I see," he said. "Looks like a case of insensibility from shock; stunned, I guess." He lifted her onto a stretcher, and with the help of the driver, she was placed in the ambulance and hurried away.

I carefully noted the name of the hospital, and returned to my hotel with the sensation of having been suddenly projected into a moving-picture melodrama, so precipitate and unreal it all seemed. My brain refused to accept or analyze the affair as an event that had happened; it was like a wild, fantastic dream. In this riot of mind, I sent an ambiguous telegram off to Lucy: "Found Dolly Megaphone.

Accident by motor. Shall await result;" which brought me out of bed in the small hours to assure a distracted little woman that my bones were still intact.

The following morning I lost no time in presenting myself at the hospital, where I found that our old neighbor had suffered no serious injury other than a severe shaking-up. If it was possible, I determined to see her, and upon expressing my wish, I was referred to the head nurse. This functionary seemed to think it quite probable and offered to send up my card. I produced one but held it back hesitatingly.

"I had hoped," I said, "to make this a little surprise. I should prefer the lady didn't know my name. Couldn't you send up word, merely, that it is a gentleman from New York?"

The nurse eyed me suspiciously, then gave me an indulgent smile. "I think so," she said genially; "anyway, we can try it," and gave the message to an attendant. In a couple of minutes the latter returned.

"The lady wants to know what gentleman from New York," the reply came back.

I felt rather crestfallen at this and probably showed it. The nurse seemed to enjoy it hugely.

"Why don't you send up the name of some common friend?" she brightly suggested.

"No, no!" I replied, "that wouldn't be quite fair." I turned to the messenger. "Tell her it's an old friend of Jim's from—well, say from across the airshaft," I instructed in desperation. He scurried off and was soon back with the reply.

"The lady says she doesn't know any of Jim's men friends and wants to know what airshaft. She says she's lived on fifteen of 'em to her certain knowledge."

I felt my cheeks grow uncomfortably warm. The nurse burst out laughing.

"I guess you'll have to send your card up, after all," she remarked indulgently.

I stepped over to a desk and pencilled the following upon the back of my visiting card: "The airshaft at 612½ West Seventieth Street, and the writer would gladly do all in his power to help his old neighbor."

"There," I said, "take her that."

This time, success crowned my efforts. But now that my path lay clear, a sensation of embarrassment and dismay suddenly gripped me, and with the sickening dread of a patient entering the surgeon's operating room, I followed the attendant up the stairs to the airy

ward. Here he indicated a dainty white bed standing at a distance over in one corner, and I moved toward it with the consciousness that my heart had suddenly precipitated itself into my boots and that my legs were made of cork. As I approached, however, I was relieved to find that she appeared to be genuinely pleased at my visit, as she half reclined, propped up by pillows, for she smiled invitingly. At the foot of the bed I hesitated.

"I know you will pardon me," I began apologetically, but got no farther. A peal of laughter greeted my words and a head of wavy black hair fell back on the pillows, convulsed in mirth.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I think this is just too funny for words! It's—it's the funniest thing that ever happened!" And she was off again in a gale of laughter.

"Yes," I agreed dumbly, in stupefied bewilderment, "isn't it? I—"

But another explosion interrupted me. "You don't see the joke though," she cried chokingly, and held out her hand with charming candor. "Won't you shake hands—Noddy?" she asked, and met my astonished gaze with a fascinating little smile.

I took the outstretched hand in stunned amazement.

"Noddy?" I repeated blankly.

"Why, yes. You're Noddy, you know," she replied gayly. "Noddy Boffin."

"Am I?" I inquired with interest, "I had always supposed my name was Robert Drew."

"Oh, of course, to the landlord and the grocer," she admitted, "but not to Jim and me. Of course, we never knew your last name; but to us you've always been Noddy Boffin."

"Why?" I inquired wonderingly.

Her brows knit thoughtfully. "Now, you mustn't think," she went on with a sudden touch of hauteur in her tone, "that we ever listened—eavesdropped, you know—but we couldn't very well help overhearing a good deal. Your voice, you see, has a—well, it's what they call a 'wire' in it, I believe, and so, naturally, we couldn't help it. And one day you banged your fist down on the table and exclaimed, 'I tell you, it's money that counts, Lucy; I'll take the dust for mine every time!' And so, after that, we always called you the dustman, and of course you know he was Noddy Boffin."

"Ye-s, I see," I replied very humbly, but the tone must have held a constrained note for she laughed provokingly and said, "Oh, but you mustn't be cross about it. We couldn't help overhearing, you know. And you don't mind my calling you Noddy, do you?" she added with

a twinkle in her fine eyes. "It's so natural, you see. But tell me—how has Grandma Phelps been this spring?"

I could feel the hot blood surging into my hair. The delightful piquancy she put into Noddy was partly accountable for this, though the remarkable turn the affair had taken certainly accentuated my confusion. I murmured that Grandma Phelps's rheumatism was very much better, and then laughed foolishly.

She threw back her head and laughed too,—the little tease.

"And Aunt Carter?" she pursued with a mischievous glance, "and Johnny Rogers, who is going to make a fortune raising bees—they're all well I hope?" She crushed her handkerchief over her mouth to stifle her mirth.

"They're all blooming!" I burst out with fine bravado.

She laughed merrily. "Isn't it interesting—so delightfully fantastic!" she bubbled. Then she beckoned to a nurse to bring me a chair. "Sit down, Noddy," she said sweetly. "Why, we haven't begun to talk yet. But really, isn't it just the oddest thing ever?"

"My dear young lady," I said, "it's more than odd, it's irresistibly fascinating! But," I motioned to the bed, "this was not very odd, though. It's a mercy you escaped with your life. Yesterday afternoon, when I held your head—"

Her eyes suddenly grew round with astonishment. "You did?" she broke in with a little gasp, "you were there and held my head? Why! They didn't tell me a word about it!"

"It was nothing," I said, "I happened to be passing at the time. But imagine my surprise when I found it was you."

Her face sobered instantly. "Oh, it was terrible!" she cried. "It came like a thunderbolt! I was coming from my uncle's—from Judge Cross's—"

I couldn't resist the temptation to interrupt. "And how is the judge?" I inquired.

"Quite well, thank you." She threw me a glance of genuine surprise. "Do you know the judge?"

"Oh, very well. He's a friend of more than two years' standing now. And Arabella?"

"Arabella is just as happy—" She pulled herself up, and a gleam of suspicion flew into her eyes. "Oh!" she cried, "I don't believe you know either one of them!"

"I think if Lucy were here," I replied quietly, "she'd testify in my favor. We were both very much interested in the judge's courtship and marriage. It's wonderful," I went on, "how one's friends draw upon one's sympathies. Lucy has never ceased to worry about

Minna Brown's baby, while Harry Cummings and his Clara have hung like millstones about our necks. As for the catastrophe of Aunt Julia—"

"And who, pray, is Aunt Julia?" she burst out. Then she leaned forward, and her eyes snapped. "It's my opinion, Mr. Boffin," she said tartly, "that you and Lucy have been eavesdropping."

"Not at all," I protested. "But one's ears unconsciously absorb sounds, you know, and particularly across airshafts. As for Aunt Julia," I added, "why, she was the old woman that Jim murdered, or at least Lucy thought he had."

She sat bolt upright and her eyes fairly blazed. "What do you mean?" she cried. "Jim—Jim never murdered anybody!"

I told her that for my part I'd never seriously believed that he had. Then I related the puzzling incident and described the agony of mind and torturing suspense that Lucy and I had suffered from the perplexing occurrence. But when I said that Lucy had actually seen the body go out the front door on a stretcher, she toppled over on the pillows and laughed until the tears came.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I think you're horrid, Noddy Boffin, and Lucy, too! And Jim—poor Jim wouldn't kill a fly! And there wasn't any Aunt Julia. It was Judy the washwoman. The stupid old thing climbed up on the set tubs to sweep a cobweb off the ceiling and slipped off, spraining her ankle. We sent her to the hospital and did everything for her. But for your wife to think—"

"Pardon me," I said, "my wife, did you say?"

"Yes—Lucy! It was cruel of her to dream of such a thing!"

"I see that you're laboring under a slight misapprehension," I said quietly. "Lucy is not my wife. Lucy is my sister."

She stared in amazement. "Not your wife?" she repeated in wonder-struck tones, a delicate flush overspreading her face. "Why, how very strange!"

"Not at all," I said. "The family Bible can attest to that truth. There has never been any question of the relationship, so far as I know. As to the supposed murder, I can truthfully say that neither Lucy nor I really believed your husband was actually guilty."

Her expression changed in a flash. Her eyes dropped, and a serious, half reproachful look crept over her face.

"I am afraid we're both two dreadful idiots, Mr. Drew," she said with gentle emphasis, "and I can't imagine what you must think of me. Evidently airshafts are very doubtful channels of introduction. Jim, you—well, Jim is my brother."

A sudden joy leaped into my heart. For one entrancing moment

we sat drinking in each other's eyes, though I scarcely dared accept that lovely flush as being all for me. Then I rose to my feet.

"Isn't it immense!" I exclaimed. "If not the funniest thing that ever happened, it's surely the most delightful. But I don't agree with your estimate of airshafts. I think they're—well, stunning!"

She laughed softly. "Yes, that's surely a good definition," she agreed. "They certainly are—stunning—or at least this one has proved to be so. But are you going now?"

"I feel rather guilty as it is," I said, "but just one more little shock, or question. Do you remember my offering you my seat in the subway something over a year ago?"

"Perfectly," she replied with an amused smile, "and I had such a queer feeling about it. It seemed somehow as if you wanted to speak to me. Did you?"

"Well, rather. As the girls say, I was 'dying to,' but you slipped away like a tantalizing dream. This time, however, you were trapped."

A momentary wave of pain passed over her face. "I should think so!" she moaned. "It was awful! But I shall be out tomorrow," she added brightly, "and I return to New York Saturday with the judge and Arabella. And you?"

"I leave tonight," I answered.

"Well, it's certainly been very kind of you," she said with her old enthusiasm, "and I want to thank you a thousand times for picking me up, and calling, and—"

"I almost forgot," I broke in, "there's one other little thing, a minor matter to be sure, but what is your last name—Dolly?"

Her handkerchief instantly flew to her mouth. "Why," she said, stifling a laugh, "it's Cross, the same as the judge's. But," her features relaxed and her eyes met mine with charming sincerity as she held out a slim, white hand, "I want you to come and see us at 619½ West Eightieth Street when I am back. Jim will be delighted,—and so surprised. And you must surely bring Lucy,—it will be great fun! Will you promise, Noddy Boffin?"

An intoxicating thrill stole over me as I took her hand and promised, promised from my heart of hearts.

"For, you see, we all have so much in common, so many memories," she added brightly, with a quick sparkle in her grey eyes, "and it will be so jolly and interesting to talk over old times."

The Cradle of Genius*

BY WILLIAM H. HAMBY

URT Riley, special writer for the Evening News, had just finished a feature article for the Sunday editor and pushed back from his typewriter, when Dr. Will Dean came in and, with a mere "Hello," took a chair by an open window. It was one of the first balmy nights of spring.

There was restraint between the two. Burt had avoided the young doctor for several days, ever since he had seen him driving in the big green car of Dr. Hodo, arch-quack and proprietor of the Miracle Medical Institute. Riley and Dean had been good friends for three years. They had both come from country towns and both had had their share of hard knocks, but they had kept the faith,—at least until now. Dean had had a hard time winning a foothold in the city, but he had always lived up to a high code of professional honor, and was really an excellent young doctor. But Burt knew what it meant when Dean was seen wth Dr. Hodo,—he was going to sell his name, his professional honor, and himself to that medical vampire for a price.

Dean looked out at the spring night and the twinkling lights, and drummed on the window ledge.

"And Paula Minyon comes next week." Minyon was the great American soprano.

"Yes," said Burt, "I've just been out to Clover Bend, the little home town, to get a feature story about her."

The young doctor looked at him questioningly a moment. "Did you know that was my home town too?"

"I didn't," replied the reporter, "until this trip."

The doctor had scarcely ever referred to his home town, and then never by name.

"Yes," said Dean reflectively, "I knew Paula when she was a little girl. We went to school together. I heard her sing her first song in public on commencement night."

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"You weren't in love with her?" The reporter scented a lead.

"No indeed! Even then her temper was execrable."

"I wouldn't think that of her cousin, Anna Bradshaw," said Burt.

Dean quickly turned his face away and looked out into the night. Directly he asked without turning: "Did you see—her?"

"Yes," replied Burt. "I fancy she has quite as much ability in a quiet way as her cousin, but she struck me as very retiring—and rather sad—only she has a beautiful winning smile, hasn't she?"

Dean did not reply, but looked steadily out of the window. He got up directly and walked across the room with his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the floor.

"I think," he said retrospectively, "it was the coming of Paula Minyon made me do—this other.

"It was like this, you see," he continued, walking restlessly and speaking more rapidly. "There was a group of us youngsters, four or five, that Clover Bend thought gave great promise. The paper used even to refer to the town as 'The Cradle of Genius.' We felt that our friends expected great things of us and that those great things meant money and notoriety.

"Jim Benson is making thirty thousand a year on the stock exchange—and Clover Bend is proud. Will Emmis gets his signed stories and articles into the best magazines—and Clover Bend says delightedly, 'I told you so.' Paula Minyon's picture has been in every daily paper in America—Paula, well, Clover Bend mentions Paula in adoring awe.

"But Will Dean"—his tone turned harsh—"Will Dean, of whom most was expected, owes his best friend a dollar for his Tuesday's dinner, and his name has not been mentioned, even in small type."

The young doctor dropped wearily down by the window. "Oh, don't you see how it is?" There was misery in his tone.

"And Dr. Hodo has offered you—?"

"Four thousand a year."

"And he'll print your picture in his thousands of circulars and advertise you as one of the greatest doctors in the city."

"Yes. And because of his advertising, Clover Bend and small towns like that consider the Miracle Institute one of the greatest medical establishments in America."

"Yes," said Burt dryly, "Anna Bradshaw told me how glad she was to see your great success."

Dean winced. He knew she had read in Dr. Hodo's blatant

half-page advertisement the announcement that he had secured for his prescription department the eminent young Dr. William Dean.

Neither spoke for a moment. Burt, thinking what an honest, useful, happy, country doctor his friend would have made in some practice like old Dr. Williams' in Clover Bend, suddenly burst out:

"Oh, the devil! Why don't one's friends ever expect him to do good honest work, instead of win a little cheap notoriety?"

Burt saw how his friend was suffering and knew he had not surrendered without a harder battle than most good men would fight, and spoke in his old-time tone of fellowship:

"By the way, Will, I wish you would read over this feature article and see what you think of my local color. Maybe you can suggest something."

The young doctor took the copy and began to read.

It was a good article. Riley had caught the spirit of the country town—quiet, wholesome, full of quaint humors and stories and traditions; but clean and sweet as the fields of clover along the river which gave it its name.

The old doctor and his black horse and top buggy—the hale, jovial, wise friend of the little Paula and of every man, woman, and child in the town, he touched with special loving care.

And the aunt and cousin. Dean shifted his chair so that his face was turned when he came to that part of the story. And when he finished, he got up and went to the window. He ran the shade clear up and stood with his back to the reporter, looking out.

"I haven't been back," he said slowly, as though talking to the city lights, "for a long time,—nearly four years,—since I saw I was a failure here."

Riley noticed that he still held, half hidden, the picture of Anna in his hand. "I loved that town,"—the doctor spoke with the infinite regret of youth,—"but one can't stay in the 'Cradle of Genius.' "

For two weeks Riley saw his friend scarcely at all. The Miracle Institute furnished room and board for its staff; and Hodo kept them busy, for his spurious advertising had a wide reach.

But one evening the reporter found his friend at his old table for dinner. He saw in his face disgust and suffering; and knew the battle was on between his professional honesty and his environment. There may be men who can live in a den of thieves and be honest, but not one in a million does it, and Will would not be the exception. Either he would get out—or—

"I have to sleep there," Dean volunteered as they ordered dinner.

"But"—he shrugged his shoulders disgustedly—"I can't eat with that bunch any longer."

Riley talked a little about happenings in the city. The young doctor scarcely heard. Directly he shrugged again and declared with a look of loathing in his face:

"That beast Zango sits at my table."

Riley knew his mind was still on the horrors of the Miracle Institute. Zango was the principal surgeon. He did most of the operating—when he was sober. He had a certain swiftness and daring and a great amount of bluff, but he was absolutely without honor or human sympathy. A life meant less than a drink to him. A dead patient who had paid in advance was worth as much as a live one.

The reporter hoped against hope that in the first flush of disgust Dean would leave the Institute. But when day after day the young doctor came with a growing look of hardness and cynicism in his face, Riley, accustomed as he was to the tragedies of life, grew sick at heart, and changed his dinner hour so as to miss his friend.

One morning toward the middle of May, the reporter went to the Union Station early to get an interview with a senator who was to stop only long enough for breakfast.

As the street car, not yet burdened with morning workers, b'rr'd along the yet drowsy down-town streets, Riley saw the first glint of the sun on the tall buildings, and felt the spring thrill even among insensate brick and iron. Somehow he found himself thinking of Clover Bend and its elms and lawns and flowers; of old Dr. Williams and his black horse, jogging happily along the dewy lanes beside blossoming fields of clover.

The reporter got his interview and started out through the station. A stretcher was being carried through one of the entrances, and after a passing glance he turned and looked again.

It was Anna Bradshaw on the stretcher.

He turned to follow. But before he got out to the street the door of the ambulance was closed and the driver started quickly away. On its side he read: "Miracle Medical Institute."

Thirty minutes later Riley went up the steps of the Miracle Medical Institute, two at a time.

The sleepy night-attendant still on duty in the outer office, told him that Dr. Hodo was not up and could not be seen before nine o'clock. It was then six.

"Then I must see Dr. Dean," he said emphatically.

"He is not up either, and we do not call them before their time."

"But I must see him," insisted Riley. "He's a friend of mine, and it's important."

But the attendant only yawned and shook his head. Riley started for the door into the hall. The attendant was wide awake now and sprang in front of him.

"No admittance except by permission of Dr. Hodo."

Riley never realized, as he did in the next three hours, how slowly time dies when you are trying to kill it.

Exactly at nine o'clock he was back. There was a new attendant on duty, brisk, uniformed, important. The reporter wrote on his card, "Immediate and urgent."

He was speedily passed into the private office.

"Doctor," said Riley, "some friends of mine came in from Clover Bend this morning. I want permission to see them for a few minutes."

Hodo stroked his freshly combed and perfumed side whiskers, and shook his head very regretfully.

"We never allow a patient to see friends before an operation. It upsets them, you know."

"Is there to be an operation?" The reporter tried to appear composed.

"Yes,—acute appendicitis,—operation must be at once."

"At what hour?" Riley tried to breathe normally.

"That is left to the surgeon in charge. Sorry I can't grant your request." Hodo began to open his morning mail.

"Does Dr. Dean know?" asked Riley. "He's a friend of theirs."

"I'm sure I don't know. The patient came to us in the regular way." Hodo's tone was curt.

Riley started out through the inner door.

"The janitor has neglected to unlock it," apologized the doctor. "You'll have to go out through the front office." And as Riley started, he saw Hodo press a signal button.

In the front office Riley made an effort to enter the building but found himself politely but effectually on the front steps in a moment, under the "Health for All the People" arch.

In a few minutes he was around in the alley at the rear of the building. He entered the kitchen. A big, husky cook started to hustle him out, but he slipped a bill to him with a wink. "Young lady friend upstairs I want to see."

Once in, he assumed the air of belonging.

In the hall on the third floor he met a nurse coming out of the operating room.

"At what time is the operation to be? The one from Clover Bend?"

"At ten," she replied.

"Who is to perform it?"

"Dr. Zango." The nurse made a grimace and shrugged her shoulders.

Riley looked at his watch. It was quarter past nine.

He called to the nurse, who started away.

"Can you tell me where I'll find Dr. Will Dean? I'm a new man here."

Down long halls and through winding corridors and up long flight of steps, the reporter went, nearly running when no one was in sight. The building covered half a block, and Dean's office was on the fifth floor, in the extreme opposite wing. He was the prescription doctor and seldom ever saw his patients; the symptoms were merely brought to him.

"Is Dr. Dean here?" he inquired hurriedly of the chambermaid in the hall outside the office.

"No," she said, "he left about ten minutes ago."

"Were did he go?" he asked with a sudden sickening horror. Of course she did not know.

"I'll wait," he said, and pushed back the partly open door and entered. Maybe there was a memorandom on his desk telling where he was gone.

There was not. It was nine-twenty. Riley's mind worked desperately. There was little chance of finding him in forty minutes. But what else was there to do? He might go down and forbid the operation, but on what authority? He might threaten Hodo, but the quack would only sneer. Hodo was not afraid of a reporter,—not when he had a half-page advertisement in the News every day.

It came to him in a flash that Hodo had sent Dean away on purpose. And with sudden inspiration he sat down at the desk and took up the house 'phone.

"This is Dr. Dean," he called to the secretary. "Where was it I was to go? I lost the address."

"Wait a minute, I'll ask Dr. Hodo." And then: "2463 Trenton Avenue."

The chambermaid showed him a rear exit and he went down the stairs three at a jump. It was nine-twenty-seven.

In the court at the rear he saw the Institute's big green automobile, and the chauffeur in the seat. Without a moment's hesitation he jumped in. "Twenty-four sixty-three Trenton Avenue," he ordered. "We've got to get Dr. Dean quick."

The unsuspecting chauffeur covered the distance almost as fast Riley could count the blocks.

The car had hardly stopped before the reporter was at the door. It was a rooming house.

"Is Dr. Dean here?" The question was quick and sharp; the answer slow and uncertain. There was somebody sick on the third floor,—the maid would inquire.

But Riley was half way up the stairs before the girl could turn around.

At last,—it seemed an hour,—he found the sick room, and Dr. Dean answered the hurried knock.

"Why, Burt,—What is it?"

"Come quick,— for heaven's sake hurry," he gasped, and grabbed him by the arm and started for the stairs.

"Let your coat go. Come quick. Zango is going to operate on—on Anna Bradshaw—at ten."

With a sound that might have been an oath, or a groan,—or a prayer, Dean leaped ahead, and Riley scarcely got to the car in time to jump in beside him.

"Quick!" he ordered.

The car shot forward. Riley looked at his watch. Even now they were preparing that trusting girl for the operating table.

"What time?" Dean's lips were white save for a long red mark his teeth had made.

"Nine-forty-five."

The Doctor leaned forward and again called to the chauffeur. Riley started to speak, but at the look on Dean's face turned away. That twenty blocks seemed as long as the road to eternity

It was nine-fifty-one as they ran up the steps under the blatant arch. If they were delayed a minute in the outer office it meant—

Riley turned sick and weak at the thought, but Dean leaped ahead, his eyes blazing in a ghostly face.

The attendant in the outer office arose to take their cards, but both lunged at the inner door, and went through like battering rams.

Across the second room they dashed. There was a warning tinkle in the inner office and then the sound of someone running swiftly for the door. Could he get there first?

But both braced their shoulders for the crash, and Dean seized the door knob just as the hand inside reached for the key. The door swung back with a bang.

Dr. Hodo, alarmed, but with pompous indignation, started to speak.

"Stop that operation—quick!"

Dean's words came like the exhaust of an engine.

Hodo made one dissenting motion, but his hand stopped half way. In an instant he sat cringing at the desk telephone, calling the operating room.

"Give me an order for that patient to be removed."

"It was Dean's second command,—quickly and tremblingly obeyed.

Two hours later Dean came to Riley in the waiting room of the best hospital in the city. Above, four of the finest surgeons in the country had just finished their consultation.

It was not appendicitis and Zango's operation would have been fatal.

Dean was ashen gray, and he shook as with a nervous chill, but his eyes still burned.

"Riley," he said unsteadily, "go to—that place and get my things. I don't want to commit murder."

It was the middle of June when Riley one morning found in his mail a copy of the Clover Bend Watchman with two local items marked:

"We are glad to report that Dr. Will Dean, one of the best physicians in the country, has bought the practice of old Dr. Williams who is to retire."

"The Clover Bend chapter of the P. E. O. gave a shower Tuesday evening for their lovely and accomplished secretary, Miss Anna Bradshaw, who is to be married Thursday to Dr. Will Dean."

And then on the margin of the paper was pencilled in a familiar hand:

"Clover Bend—the Cradle of Happiness."

The Witch of the Canyon*

BY HARVEY FERGUSSON

ALL of the Mexican laborers were on a strike, and the work was indefinitely delayed, for no better reason than that an ugly and aged native woman had disappeared, leaving no clue to the mystery except a large spot of blood before her doorstep. Her adobe hut stood on a "bench" on the steep canyonside, and close by that narrow gash in the rock, where, by the grace of God, and my labors as an engineer, was some day to be the Chama railroad. It was a hard five-mile climb from our camp in the canyon to the point where we were then working; and in order to get even a short day's work done, it was necessary to return after the quick-falling darkness had settled upon the canyon. That meant passing the supposedly dead woman's house in the dark; and therefore my whole crew, from water boy to foreman, had rebelled.

For to these Mexican peons, as I soon learned, the strange old hag who lived alone on the mountain, aloof from the people in the "plaza" down the river, gathering herbs and selling charms for a living, was a creature of supernatural powers—a witch. While she was alive they had feared and hated her, purchased her charms and cures at outrageous prices, and sought her occult aid in their loves and quarrels; and now that she had vanished from their sight, she had become a still more terrible power.

It was sufficiently evident, to me, that something or somebody had killed old Juliana and made away with her body, thereby forever ending her earthly influence for good or evil. Considering the number of enemies her alleged suspicious practices must have made, and her lonely and unprotected life, her taking-off did not seem hard to account for. But, whatever had befallen her, to the Mexicans she had now become a baleful spirit, roaming about in search of revenge. It was even quite possible, according to them, that she was not dead at all; but had merely assumed the form of some night-

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prowling beast, leaving a pool of her human blood behind as a sort of souvenir. Such things, they informed me, had often happened, and they were ready with precedents, which, having come down from their forefathers, had for them the weight of absolute authority.

All of this superstitious lore was ridiculous enough to a civilized white engineer; but the fact did not build any curves on the Chama railroad. And the situation remained that I could not induce a single man to go up the canyon that day and take the terrible risk of returning in the twilight. They all sat about camp, some of them gambling, some talking the matter over in sullen groups that dissolved whenever I tried to take a part in the argument. The only means of bringing the superstitious cowards to time, that I could devise, was by an example that would set their fears at rest. If I could induce one Mexican to brave the terrors of the canyon, perhaps the others would be encouraged.

There was one man in the crew that I thought I could rely upon. He was Juan Baca, the cook, an intelligent, good-natured fellow, who had lived in town, and whom I believed to be fairly free from the incubus of superstition that rested upon the minds of the others. But when I proposed that he go up the canyon after some tools that had been left behind, he laughed uneasily to conceal his nervousness and began to make excuses. It was too late, he explained; the shadows were already falling in the canyon, and it would be hard for him to find the things. Besides, he must get supper.

Then I resorted to foul means. I gave Juan three fingers of excellent Scotch whiskey from the flask in my tent. His courage rose wonderfully. Two more drinks and he started up the canyon, singing an endless folk song at the top of his voice, while the surly mutineers looked on in astonishment. It was exactly the effect that I had wanted to produce, and I lit a pipe and sat down by the fire, with a feeling of relief, to await results. They were not long in coming.

It was nearly dark when Juan descended the hillside into camp like a landslide. He was undoubtedly in a panic. I had never seen a strong and phlegmatic man more completely jarred out of his self-possession. He was pale with a sickly grey pallor, and the points of his erstwhile jaunty moustache twitched nervously as he tried to talk. When I questioned him he sulked like a kicked hound, but some of the other men repeated his story to me. Something had silently dogged him, he told them, all the way up the grade until he turned back in terror, and then chased him until he was in sight

of the camp fire, when it had uttered a terrible scream. He did not describe either the "thing" or the scream in any comprehensible manner, and I felt that there was a reasonable doubt whether he had seen and heard anything except the shadows and the night wind, elaborated by his own fancy.

Marveling at the vagaries and hallucinations of a superstitious mind, I retired to my tent to think the matter over. I reflected that perhaps my whiskey had been as much to blame as the alleged witch, but whatever the reason, the experiment with Juan had obviously made matters worse. The whole crew was now convinced, if any of them had doubted it before, that some malevolent spirit was abroad in the canyon. If the work was to go on the next day, something must be done, and that immediately. After a little hesitation, I resolved that I would spend the night in Juliana's house. If the men found me there whole and well in the morning, they could scarcely doubt that her shade was at least harmless, while if there was anything tangible back of Juan's terror, I might discover what it was. I took a double army blanket, wrapped in it a sawed-off shot gun of the sort used by express messengers, and after bidding my coward-crew a contemptuous *adios,* set off up the roadbed.

There was about half a moon in the sky, and its light showed me the freshly cut grade winding ahead like a chalk line along the canyon wall, now lost in the shadow of some gully, and again reappearing where it rounded some jutting curve. I could just hear the river tumbling along several hundred feet below, and the canyon was filled with bottomless gloom, so that my pathway seemed to hang in the air. As I trudged along on my strange errand I could not help thinking about that singular superstition of primitive people, which endows the old and ugly and odd with supernatural powers—a superstition absurd beyond all others, and yet the most widespread of all. And as I thought of the old hag Juliana, sitting in her doorway as I had often seen her, wrinkled and toothless and inscrutable, I felt that I could almost comprehend the psychology of such a belief.

Once I stopped and turned quickly about, for exactly what reason I could not tell. A man alone in the wilderness at night often has the sensation of being stealthily followed. And, often, indeed, it is the warning of a subtle sixth sense, for the great cats, panther and bob-cat, will trail a man for hours, not daring to spring. At any rate, I peered intently into the darkness for several minutes

without detecting anything, and then kept rapidly on, not deigning another look.

When I had reached Juliana's abode, perched in high isolation above the gloom of the canyon, I intuitively glanced about for the spot of blood, the discovery of which had been the beginning of my troubles. It was no longer there. I had seen it, myself, in the morning, drying in the sun and curling up long black fingers of gore; but now it had cleanly disappeared off the bare rock before the doorstep—the fact was indisputable. It suggested the absurd fancy that Juliana had rejoined her mortal frame, blood and all. In those weird surroundings, the idea so strongly impressed my mind that I approached the closed door with some hesitation, and even timidly knocked. But there was not a sound from within, and when I pushed the door open the room was obviously empty. Some strings of red chile peppers hung from the unhewn rafters, and also various dried herbs that pervaded the place with a queer, musty odor. The furniture was next to nothing.

A very small adobe hearth was built in one of the corners, as in all Mexican houses, and I set to work at building a fire as quickly as possible. When the red flame licked upward and the shadows leapt back, I felt a sense of relief and comfort. The immensity of the night all about me, looking in through the black square of the single paneless window, made my tiny haven of light and warmth seem all the more desirable. I spread the blanket and rolled myself in it with a billet of wood for a pillow and my feet to the fire. The short shot gun lying at my side gave me a feeling of security, which nothing but the cool touch of steel and the capable look of a good gun can bring to a man alone in the mountains. All in all I felt well satisfied and began telling myself that I should have a good night of sleep in spite of my strange situation.

Sleep did not come so easily, however. For more than an hour I lay staring at the open window, where the night peered in as with a still black eye, or watching the noiseless dance of the shadows upon the wall. I resolutely downed the grotesque fancies that crowded my mind and tried to think of all sorts of monotonous things. Gradually my efforts, combined with the sinking light of the fire and the soft voice of the canyon wind, lulled me into a doze, and then into a sleep that could not have been a deep one.

For it was no sound or touch that awakened me, but just the subtle, unmistakable sense of another presence within the room. Instantly I was wide awake with every sense alert. I had evidently

slept several hours, for the fire, which I had fed with a heavy billet, had died to a faint smoulder that lit a little space before the hearth and made the shadows that fillled the corners all the more impenetrable. As I lay motionless, trying to vindicate by sight or sound the strange feeling that oppressed me, a single tongue of flame shot into the air and expired, the glow died, and the darkness was absolute.

At that moment there rang out within the room an indescribable scream of agony and terror, filling the place with a confused volume of sound and dying without an echo.

Fear, utter, uncomprehending fear, laid clammy, ghostly hands all over my body and clutched at my throat. It traveled along my spine and stirred my hair with a chilly, prickly breath. I was suffocated, I could not move, but only peered into the darkness with eyes unnaturally dilated, seeking madly for something that lived and moved.

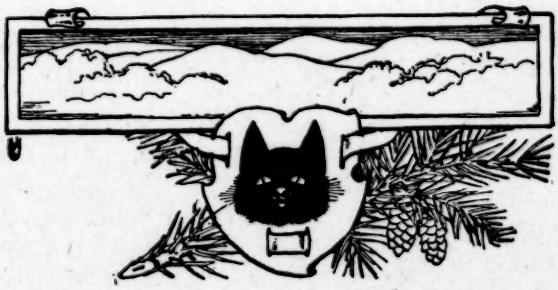
Whether that terrible tension lasted for seconds or minutes I cannot tell; but at last my straining eyes discovered a mark in the blackness. In a far corner I saw two points of cold, green fire that seemed sinking closer to the ground. It was the visible stimulus needed for action. With one hand I managed to raise the shot gun which had never left my grip, and pulled the trigger, sending a scattering charge of buck shot straight at the threatening lights.

I saw a long body shoot upward and heard it fall with a heavy thud. In a moment I was upon my feet and fired shot after shot at the writhing form in the corner until it lay still. My hands were trembling and I was cold all over as I fumbled at repairing the fire. When at last the flame sprang into life, I saw a very large, gaunt panther, with its face and throat shot almost to pieces, and the torn lips rolled back from the yellow teeth in a dead snarl. I tended that fire with solicitous care the rest of the night, and very early in the morning I returned to camp, triumphant with the beast's tail as a trophy. The strike was broken.

It was easy to construct the whole story of Juliana's undoing and the subsequent mysterious antics of her supposed spirit. The panther was a very old one, which had been forced to hunt man because it was too slow to catch deer and other game. For, though all of the great cats will trail a man, it is only when desperate with hunger that they will spring. Having made off with the old woman, it had doubtless returned to lick up the blood and lurk in the vicinity.

Juan's impression of a noiseless pursuer had been quite correct, and both he and I had heard the usual wailing scream of a hunting panther. Fear and whiskey had deadened him to its real nature, and in that tiny room, I would have defied any man to think it less than a voice of hell. I have heard panthers squall at many a camp fire in the open night, and the sound of it always conveys a thrill; but I shall never forget the reduplicated horror of that scream in the witch's hut.

The lucky part was that I woke when I did. The brute was undoubtedly waiting for the fire to die before it sprang. God is good to the foolish.



Under the Lion Skin*

BY W. J. BAHMER

IF I could ever get under the hide of that conceited Hubbard, and show him up for the braying ass I know him to be, it ought to open Alice Gardner's eyes to the cheap bluff, parading as such a wonderful lawyer. What any girl can see in a fellow like that is beyond me, but when the judge's daughter lets that false-alarm rattle around the place and tell her he's the big noise, it stumps me to figure out what good her college education is to her if it hasn't sharpened the faculties which ought to enable her to distinguish a real man from a four-flush.

When it comes to discussing that fellow, don't look for any posies of language; just a fistful of the toughest adjectives I can grab is all that's needed to biff this subject. H. Ackley Hubbard—I'll bet he put the same curling iron on his name that he used on his mustache. In the few years he's been in Hopeville he's paraded an opinion of himself that requires at least two hours to pass a given point. Look at the swagger in that tilted cigar, the conceit in that shoulder-swinging walk. It's a cinch the only thing he's talked to Alice Gardner all the way to the court house is H. Ackley Hubbard, his masterful powers, and marvelous achievements. There's the wind coming from the corridor:

"Making allowance, of course, for your unprofessional knowledge of fine points in law, Miss Gardner, you never heard of any case tried in just so smooth a way as I've tried this one."

The pause in the legal luminary's condescension was probably meant to let this sink in, though she saw a place to file a demurrer: "The trial isn't over yet, you know, Mr. Hubbard."

"Oh, I'm the good finisher too, let me assure you." Where he stood just outside the library door I couldn't avoid seeing him in his favorite performance of rocking on his heels and toes. "In almost no time, I've worked up the strongest possible chain of evidence

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against Scudder, that ordinarily would take the best of them ten times as long. Nobody on earth can break that chain. Not a weak link in it. If any lawyer in a big city handled a case the way I've handled this, the newspapers would be spreading his name all over the country."

Considerable exposure to this sublimated ego may have hardened Alice Gardner somewhat, for I could see over the top of the state report I was leafing that she hadn't collapsed yet. While deliberating about heaving the book in his direction, I heard her gently toss this at him: "Hasn't the testimony of that man Nelson counted most of all?"

It ought to have made a dent in the crust of stupendous egotism, but it just bounced off as he swelled up with, "Right there is where I played my trump card. Just when nobody dreamed that anyone had seen the shooting, I had Nelson on tap all the time, ready at the right minute to spring him as the eye-witness."

"It's his story that seems most damaging to Scudder, it appears to me from all I hear," she gave the crust another little dab, but nothing except a meat ax could make an impression there.

"Don't overlook the big thing that stands out foremost in this celebrated case: the record I'm making in swift prosecution." Another heel-and-toe rock, cigar sticking toward his eyebrow. "I've shown them all how to facilitate court business. No interminable delays in my methods. Less than three months since the shooting, and Scudder as good as strapped in the chair. I've demonstrated how efficiently the law can move when there's a man to move it. You're probably aware, Miss Gardner, of the unpopularity of the law's delays. My expediting of this case will make me more solid than ever with the county. They made no mistake electing me prosecutor."

No use wasting a perfectly good law book on that head. The only suitable thing would be chloroform.

"Mark my words," he was pinning more violets on himself, "this case is opening a lot of people's eyes. They're only beginning to wake up to me. There are bigger offices that I'm going to get. Nobody at the Hopeville bar ever made the record I'm making. They've all got to take their hats off to me."

Miss Gardner hadn't been saying anything for a while. I suppose there really wasn't anything left for her to say. It was more a time to weep. I noticed Hubbard draw a little nearer to her.

"This case," he paused impressively, evidently yearning to fix her

attention by a moment of suspense, "this case is giving me a state reputation."

"Really? Then you'll be famous."

"I've 'arrived', I think." He glanced over his shoulder, then lowered his tone. "A famous name is something, isn't it?"

But her gaze was on the crowd filing into the court room, and I could see the H. Ackley Hubbard brows lift slightly and continue lifted in pained surprise as he surveyed her momentary obliviousness to the presence of the mighty. Then with a hitch of his shoulder, presumably to indicate the ease with which he could dismiss something that, after all, was of minor consequence compared with the important considerations engaging a mind responsible for the prosecution of the Scudder case, he turned away, but stopped, as if suddenly inspired by a brilliant idea.

"By the way, Miss Gardner, I know you don't attend trials, but this afternoon is an exception. If you're going to be here a while, drop into court. I want you to see how I've handled this, something way above a shoe-string bar, practicing law out of a form book," and the modest violet, pausing only to see her big plume shake doubtfully, went shoulder-swinging to the expectant multitude in the court room.

Her eyes, following him, seemed to hold something of a pensive mood. I slapped the book shut, which brought her out of her revery to discover me in the library. It relieved my pain somewhat to mumble, "If this trial goes Hubbard's way he'll need a shoe horn to help him put on his hat."

"I suppose it does mean much to him." She was again looking thoughtfully at nothing in particular, and as I happened to be within the range of vision she eyed me and continued: "But I judge it means just as much to you."

It didn't strike me that there was any need to corroborate that statement, and my hands went exploring through pockets for papers I might want to refer to that afternoon. In the stuff I fished out was a green-covered affair I had picked up at the drug store, the kind of literary product embellished with the picture of a disemboweled individual from whom radiates lines to a surrounding zoo. At the apparition Miss Gardner's nose wrinkled in disgust. Probably it appeared to her the more trifling at such a time and place and in the company of a fledgling at the bar appointed to save a man's life. From her expression it was easy to see she was conscious of something ridiculous in an hour of grave responsibility, an hour that

ought to give me more profound concern than book-collecting of the spraddle legged zodiac kind.

However, I wasn't contemplating her view to any great extent just then. My thoughts were principally on what was before me in that court room in the next few minutes. If I could just get under the hide of that conceit, skin him alive, and do it in the simplest little old way ever mapped out in the A B C of the game, I'd feel so good I could taste it. To get the H. Ackley Hubbard goat, that high-stepping angora on the pinnacle of Know-it-all, and get it with the wormiest kind of wormiest old chestnut would give me the giggles for a week. But I imagine I wasn't looking very cheerful over the outlook, for the girl said presently: "I suppose, Mr. Coleman, you're not much encouraged by the Scudder trial?"

"I haven't lost faith in the man's innocence." I meant what I said because I believed it, but that didn't keep her from smiling.

"Of course; I might have known every lawyer's client is innocent."

"As client and as a fellow being," I assured her, "his case enlists all my sympathy."

Perhaps my funereal bearing depressed the levity, for the smile receded. "It would be monstrous for an innocent man to go to the chair! It all depends upon you to save him?"

"I'm giving him my best." My best! So far from enough that the doubt puckered her brow, and she smiled with her lips, not her eyes—pitying me.

"It would be the winning of your spurs to get an acquittal. It would be glorious!" she made amiable effort at encouragement.

"It would be life to Scudder," I responded with noble consideration, longing to beat a swelled head to a palpitating pulp.

She eyed me with that expression of struggling doubt which made me think I'd be appraised at about thirty cents if I didn't do something. I folded my arms and looked determined.

"You really do hope to acquit him?" she asked finally.

"I can tell better this afternoon."

At the door I heard her saying, "Mr. Coleman, is it a trial I can safely hear?"

"Nothing objectionable. If you care to attend I'll find you a chair." On our way to the court room we met the judge, who immediately assumed parental jurisdiction of the case by directing that his daughter be seated on the bench, and the bailiff led her there while I went to the table.

I noticed Hubbard glance toward her with a pompous nod, then rise with his most important air, one hand held behind, and the other going to his chin as he moved in a profound passage toward the clerk's desk to engage that official privately in consequential appearing conversation about utterly inconsequential things. In the course of this impressive proceeding the occasional glances which the learned counsel designed to bestow upon the attendant populace expressed the unmistakable conviction that he held supreme command of the situation.

I was still asking myself how far all his show might carry him in the estimation of the girl up there, and whether or not she saw through his scenery and theatrical effect. There was certainly enough on the surface for a girl of her perception to recognize that the fellow, by instinct and imitation, proceeded on bluff. As she watched his posing I looked for some sign of comprehension, but saw none in the inscrutable calmness gazing upon him. After all, she might be mildly tolerant of what perhaps to her appeared nothing more than the survival of the creed that humanity finds it easiest to judge from appearances, as much so in that Hopeville court room as away back in ancient Rome when the H. Ackley Hubbards succeeded mostly by going about in sedan chairs with slaves enough to organize a ball team. The Hopeville Hubbard's best available display of pomp and power and proud circumstance was a gorgeously banded cigar. This, with due deliberation, he now brought into view for this august occasion of such epochal significance in the annals of criminal prosecution, and with slow affidavit-like precision clipped the end and prepared for an unlighted smoke. Thus was conveyed to humble onlookers the suggestion that success was so attached to H. Ackley that he could actually afford to eat high priced cigars.

A movement in the crowd at the door drew Miss Gardner's attention from the cigar to the arrival of the prisoner. Her intent scanning of his face, his heavily contracted brow and tightened lips, led me for an instant to harbor the thought that she might be searching my client's features for some token which would stamp him as incapable of committing the crime that had brought him within the shadow of the electric chair. I admit Scudder's looks and the clenched fist were hardly the things to predispose sentiment in his favor. While the sheriff led him to his seat beside me, a dubious gaze looked down from the bench on the pair of us, on poor Scudder and his cub attorney. I scrooged down farther in my

chair, and even welcomed the distraction afforded by the bustling H. Ackley, which dragged off that depressing gaze.

Lycurgus was now leafing typewritten pages of testimony, and he was doing it rapidly, pausing only once or twice to dart a lightning glance down a sheet in swift contemplation of its contents, then rustling on, a mile a minute, the busy hand snapping the paper. He was a fast express in a frock coat. He was moving the county's business on quick schedule, he was. No doubt about it, H. Ackley was all speed. However much his self-esteem might grate on some sensibilities, he wasn't lacking in energetic display of ardor in the public service, gorgeous cigar band and all. Manifestly, in the awesome view of the open-mouthed crowd and even in her interested eyes, now chained to the panorama, his was the live, dynamic temperament which did things, carried things by storm, swept through the citadel of life's prizes. The incense was burning in a reverential whisper behind me: "They may say what they please about that H. Ackley Hubbard, but he's a pretty smart one, you can just bet!"

At last the judge, who had lingered in his Havana chambers, came in and took his place on the bench, and Hubbard, with massive air, threw himself back in his chair, thumbs in his vest armholes, benignantly disposed, on his part, to let the wheels of justice grind on, the while he beamed on the observant Miss Gardner, who smiled back, doubtless conceiving increased regard for conscious power.

I had the state's star witness called to the stand, he who had given my case its black eye in his damaging testimony about what he saw at the shooting. Through the whispering, the sibilance behind me hissed its way cheerfully: "Dan Coleman's biting off more'n he can chew if he expects to break Nelson's testimony."

Candidly, I'd have felt easier to know just how big a bite I was taking. I was slow getting to my feet, and by that time I realized how still a court room could be. I turned a tranquil eye, or what I thought was a tranquil eye, on the chief witness for the prosecution. Maybe I looked soothing to him, or at least quite harmless, for at any rate Nelson became more at ease, and gradually the muscles of his tight-closed jaw relaxed as the cross-examination proceeded.

"You were with Bailey," I honeyed, "when he left the grange meeting the night he was shot?"

"Yes."

"Then you were friendly again after that line-fence dispute?"

"We spoke."

"You walked with him only part of the way?"

"To the crossroads."

"The crossroads where you saw Scudder?"

"Yes."

"You started away while they were talking?"

"I left when Scudder told Bailey, 'I'll shoot your damned head off if you lie any more about me.' "

The triumphant look he gave the spectators made it apparent how cunning he regarded his making the most of an opening to repeat the damaging words of my client at my expense. Out of the tail of my eye I could see Hubbard grinning his approval of the repetition thrown into the jury box. I saw, too, the lines around my client's mouth whiten. When I had consulted my notes and looked up again, I got the fleeting chill of a questioning gaze, as though Alice Gardner were asking herself what it was she beheld, whether hopeless incompetence or dense stupidity.

"And you kept going after you left them?" I took up my knitting again with Mr. Cunning.

"No, I stopped a little ways off."

"About how far off?"

"Oh, about twenty yards."

"It might not have been any nearer than that?" I hung out my best sample of ingratiating smile.

"No, it was twenty yards or further."

"In the road?"

"No, off the road."

"In the field?"

"No, in the woods alongside."

"The woods that run from the grange hall?"

"Yes."

I was quite aware that my line of questioning was scarcely the sort that flashed with pointed inquiry penetrating some fatal flaw, or that glittered with keen thrust laying bare a telltale contradiction. While I dawdled along the road and dilly-dallied in the woods I was praying for a rock big enough to bounce on Hubbard's head.

"What timber is in those woods?" I lingered by the wayside.

The witness hesitated, and following his perplexed glance as it shifted from the grinning Hubbard to the judge and his daughter, I saw her crimp a smile by drawing down the corners of her mouth.

"You mean how much timber is there?" grinned the witness.

"I mean what kind of timber," cooed I, sweetly feeling for a club.

"Well, there's different kinds."

"Name them."

"There's oak," obliged Nelson, searching one corner of the ceiling, then another; "walnut, scycamore—I s'pose that's most all."

"Leaves on it are pretty thick in August?" crooned I.

"Pretty much so."

I picked up the weapon from the table. "Is this the pistol that you saw used?"

"Looks like it," he identified, his brow lowering at going over ground which he had covered under direct examination.

"You could see this pistol in the defendant's hand?"

"Yes."

A hoarse sound, almost a snarl, from my client, brought my hand down on his arm, pressing him back in his chair. I had other things to attend to without fooling over an emotional client.

"And you could see the defendant aim, see how the barrel pointed, and all about it?" I purred on.

"Yes." He was looking away while I kept a hand on the trembling Scudder, who was breathing harder.

"How far was this from the grange hall?"

"About a quarter of a mile."

"The rest hadn't left the hall yet?"

"I s'posed not."

"Why did you suppose so?"

"Cause the lights was still there."

"That was a quarter of a mile away?"

"Yes." He was snappishly withdrawing all sociability now from me and my honey.

"And you didn't see any lantern where Bailey and Scudder were?"

"No, I didn't see any lantern." His growing irascibility was making him sneeringly pugnacious, a mental attitude in which he might or might not give up something that I wanted; more than likely a lemon if he should sense the drift of the questions, for there was a drift, following a beaten path to an old, old chestnut tree that I ached to spill over Hubbard. One glance in his direction to assure myself he was leafing the record in blissful ignorance, then I ambled on toward my little old trap in the leafy woods.

"You hadn't any lantern either?" I trickled some more honey.

"Of course not," rasped the witness. "I didn't need no lantern."

"Then," I fawned on him, "how did you, in the woods, twenty yards away from Bailey and the defendant, how did you see the defendant aim the pistol?"

He stared, first at me and then at the court room that was hanging breathlessly on his answer. Finally he threw himself back in the chair, his eyes stabbing me with sneering contempt, as he retored: "By moonlight!"

A chuckle at my expense hee-heed over the roomful, which the bailiff silenced with a rap. Jiminy cripes! I wanted to howl. And that crowd could snort because it saw a carefully constructed and finely woven web pierced through and through by moonshine. I suppose there were those who marveled at my hardihood in the face of defeat.

"You saw this defendant aim the pistol at night in the woods, the night of last August 15th, a quarter of a mile from the grange lights—saw the pistol, saw it aimed, saw who held it, saw it twenty yards away throught the timber, saw it all by moonlight?"

"Yes, I told you wunst before."

I fished in my pockets, and knew no shame as I met the melancholy gaze of her up there, observing the almanac of the spraddle-legged zodiac, which I opened to offer in evidence, showing it to the jury and the court, and describing from the page with deliberateness tender and sweet, for I was fondling the chestnut shillalah to "bust" H. Ackley's case wide open: "On the night of last August 15th it was the dark of the moon. There was no moonlight."

I had swung the chestnut shillalah, the worm eaten chestnut shillalah, to knock the case of the State vs. Scudder galley west. I expected it to shoot the grin off H. Ackley Hubbard, to tear off the lion hide and hang it on the fence, leaving a paralyzed ass staring, with the roomful of people, at the almanac of the spraddle-legged zodiac, while a shivery joy quivered up the back of my neck.

The trapped witness turned white. His hands gripped the chair and shook. He swallowed hard. His shifting eyes couldn't look me in the face. Then I knew it was up to me to play out the string according to revered precedent and the rules of the game as set forth therein. So I shed the honey business and started for Nelson with the regulation forward thrust of the chin, the pitiless glare boring into his soul, and all the rest of the trimmings along with

the outstretched finger leveled at the cringing star witness as I branded him "Perjurer!"

Of course I demanded his arrest, charging that he was the real slayer. "Nothing but a motive to clear himself could have induced him to attempt swearing away the life of my client," and at the same time I cordially grabbed the chance to yodel my profoundest admiration for certain swiftly energetic methods of propelling justice, and deploring the fortuitous circumstances which may somewhat obstruct the joy-riding speed of prosecution when the necessary time and the necessary ability have not been bestowed upon painstaking research, thorough exploration, and careful examination to leave no deficiencies in the evidence which might invalidate conclusions sighted at half-cock but rather unwarranted and painfully premature, little more than frothy and superficial observation, somewhat rash and altogether foolish.

Did it make any impression on H. Ackley? Not a dent.

I waded in to slash him with the driveling senility of the bait which had hooked his prosecution, citing the venerable precedent of Abe Lincoln's first defense at a murder trial, the case which throughout prompted my procedure in this parallel defense. The court at least was convinced, and ordered Nelson's arrest. Shoulders up to his ears the chief witness for Hubbard shrank back in the chair, shaking all over, whining something about the "line fence" and "didn't mean to kill him." They led him to the cell from which Scudder had come.

I looked around for some sign of a lion skin hanging on a fence, but it was rocking on heels and toes and shooting its cuffs. "Anyhow, Coleman," the imperial presence loftily reminded, "it took both you and Lincoln to beat me."

I took Alice Gardner home.

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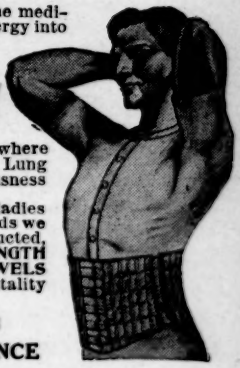

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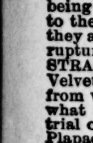

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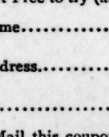

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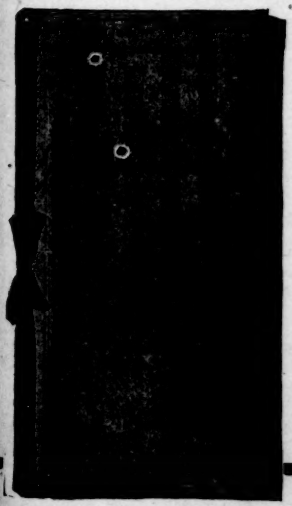

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